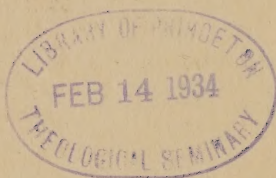


I FOLLOW  
THE ROAD

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*Anne Byrd Payson*



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# I FOLLOW THE ROAD

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A Modern Woman's Search For God

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ANNE BYRD PAYSON

*Introduction by*  
E. STANLEY JONES



THE ABINGDON PRESS

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CINCINNATI

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PAYSON  
I FOLLOW THE ROAD

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## Introduction

THE revelation of a soul as it works its way through the mazes and complexities of modern life to spiritual victory and certainty is the most fascinating thing on this planet of ours. To watch a human soul as, amid many a hesitation, it alternates between hope and despair, and then, through some inward intuition, like a homing pigeon, catches its direction and wings its way, with a strange, new gladness within its heart, to a life of harmony and peace and usefulness, is indeed something which we watch with breathless interest. And no wonder! For that very thing is what most of us want—we want to find certainty amid a world of uncertainties; we want living values by which to live amid a generally devaluated world—we want God.

There is nothing so characteristic of our age as the sense of futility that has taken hold of many minds. We have had our way and now we find we don't want our way. We have practiced self-expression and have come to the conclusion that we don't like the self which we are trying to express. For many life turns gray and meaningless.

To watch someone begin to work his way

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through all this and come out to a large place of freedom and victory is to be held by life's greatest drama. In the pages of this book we are privileged to get an intimate peep into the soul of a really brilliant modern woman as she works her way out. The recital is sincere, straightforward, and very frank, but always moving toward light and further light.

This is how the story began and how this book came to be written: During my visit to America in 1928 I was invited by the author of this book to come and have dinner with her, as she wanted to talk with me. I loathe dinner parties with their inevitable small talk and so accepted with some hesitation—especially so when I found that the lady in question belonged to what is known as “Society.” I was a plain missionary just back from the struggle with the soul of the East, I was in no mood for chaff—I wanted bread for myself and my people. I always feel empty at the close of one of these dinner parties where we are surfeited with food, but unfed in mind and heart. But I have been forever glad that I accepted this invitation.

When the sense of futility settles upon one, he usually reacts to it in one of three ways: either the person concerned settles back into cynical despair, or he takes a bantering, mocking attitude toward life, or he finds a way out. I soon found

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that the author of this book belonged to the bantering, mocking type. Again and again I heard her use the word "amusing" both of men and things. I could see she was used to mocking at almost everything with a rapierlike cleverness.

At the table they talked a sophisticated language which only occasionally I understood. Never naturalized in this kind of society, but allowed to enter it now and again in East and West, I have never really learned its language. An absence of years made me hopelessly behind in this vernacular. So I sat like a bewildered spirit on the edge of this brilliant sophistication. Somehow we got through the meal. At the close the lady asked immediately if we could go off to a quiet place, as she wanted to put something before me.

In two minutes the atmosphere had changed. I was face to face with the deepest things of life. Underneath all this outer sophistication there were deep undercurrents. The woman was well read and at home in the latest in music and art and literature. Her conversation at the table had scintillated with remote references. But now began a simple recital of a story which held me by its naïve directness. I soon found myself entirely oblivious to my surroundings, conscious only of the fact that I was looking into the soul of one who was emerging into reality and peace.

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"Somebody inveigled me into reading your book, *The Christ of the Indian Road*," she began, with a startling abruptness that contrasted sharply with the indirection and lightness of the talk at the table. "I did not want to read it, but partly because the book I wanted was not there and partly to keep a promise I picked it up one night from the table by my bed. I was especially reluctant to read it, for I saw from the title it was a religious book and I have had no connection with religion except perhaps to have a cocktail now and then with the rector in my country home." (Rather a tenuous and doubtful connection with religion!) "I began reading the book, and before I knew what was happening night had gone and my desire to sleep had gone too. I finished the book and got up and sat before the fire. I got up to meditate and to think. As I sat there I opened my heart to what you had presented in your book. I did it with almost no preliminaries. I felt that I wanted it, and therefore opened to it. A strange, warm, living Presence came into my heart.

"This hour which I call my shining hour brought a complete change in my whole outlook and attitude toward life. I began to feel differently toward life and toward people. It had been my habit to use people and then let them down—



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now I feel I must be more honorable and just to them. People now seem to me to have taken on a new worth, and, strange to say, this is not merely in regard to those of my own set, but to those outside that set.

"They wanted me to become head of an artistic society of this city but I refused, for I knew it would mean that I would have to meet Jews, and I didn't want to meet them. But now I feel that I would like to meet those Jews, so I have decided to accept.

"People of my set have seen some intangible change in me and have begun to come to me with their problems. These problems are taking on startling depths. The people who come seem to realize the fact that some fundamental change has taken place in me, and they seem to want what I have found.

"Now," she asked with an added abruptness and directness, "what do you think has happened to me?"

I could only reply, "Why, I think you've been converted."

"Yes," she replied with measured words, "I think so too.

"Now that I am a Christian what are you going to do with me? How do you act as a Christian? What is the technique? I am a lover of music. In

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music we have a technique, and we must follow it for results in harmony. What is your technique in being a Christian? Give me some book that will give me the technique.

"Another matter," she added. "I think I should go to church, don't you?"

I agreed that it would do her good.

"Where would you suggest that I should go?"

I thought down the line of the churches in that great city and after a process of elimination, I fixed on two in which I thought she would be spiritually at home and where this new life would be cultivated.

I was inwardly delighted with her recital of this strange, warm new thing that had happened to her but I was rather nonplused at the demand for a book that would give her a technique for Christian living. I could not think of such a book—except perhaps of the most elementary type, and that would not suit here. There are many fine suggestions dealing with different phases of the spiritual life scattered in many volumes, but nothing that brings them together in a worthy way into one book that gives the Christian technique for living. I confessed I could not think of one. Then I threw out this suggestion: "Why don't you work out your own technique? And why not write about it as you go through with it? Here

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you are facing a complicated society and you face it now as a Christian. You will have to work out your own technique as you make your way through it. As you do it write about it in the freshness of your contacts and reactions to people and situations. You will then give us, not something theoretical and abstract, but something that is close to reality and out of the heart of experience."

And then I added: "Please write it in the language you use in your society. Don't try to write it in mine. They know your language and will listen to it."

I threw out this suggestion hardly expecting anything from it. But this book is the result.

I lost sight of the matter for a number of years, and the only contact I have had with the lady during these years has been in connection with her desire to make some provision for helping the villagers of India. This assured me that the new Life was at work within her, broadening her interest and sympathy.

When I received the manuscript of this book I was surprised, for I thought she had lost sight of it as I had. I must confess I went to the task of reading it with the feeling that I was fulfilling a duty, for I get many manuscripts—most of them sent to me uninvited. I therefore rather shrink from the sight of one of them. But I had not

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read very far into this one before I was gripped—gripped to the depths. Here was a great human story, the revelation of a soul that was following the gleam amid the complexities of modern life. Something redemptive had begun working at the heart of her life and the results are here revealed.

Someone has said that all great literature is autobiographical. It is. But here we have autobiography at its deepest depths—at the place of inward motive and affection and decision.

There is nothing that modern Christianity needs more than it needs spiritual discipline. Modern Christianity is haphazard and hand-to-mouth. We tell people to “be good,” but we don’t give them a technique of the good life. Here is an attempt to work out a technique for Christian living—a technique which is not a completed one, but which represents the experience of one soul as she faces life with Christ.

If it does nothing more than stimulate others to work out their own technique and tell about it, this attempt will be justified. But it will do more than that. Apart from what it does to stimulate others, it has its message, told with brilliancy and yet with simple directness.

E. STANLEY JONES.



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## Prologue

MY supreme excuse, as an amateur Christian, for putting on paper the story of my attempt to approach Christ is the desire that others may experiment with my effort; the impulse to ask others to a place that is lovely. It is the hospitality of a heart warmed by happiness and strengthened by the assurance of what is easily demonstrated but rarely acknowledged. I mean, the fact that human development is the result of human experience and that the mind (the psychic part of the brain) may be educated to the highest of human experiences—the consciousness and comprehension of Christ.

This quest and the experience that definitely provoked it are so intertwined with a partial but absorbing knowledge of mind processes and an intense and constant devotion to music, that it is difficult to point out the moment of their merging. In to-day's retrospect they all seem avenues of approach to the presence of God. From them has come a realization that Christ is the completion of any consecutive and reasonable effort to rise to him, though in one's first feebleness the climb be ever so halting. I speak from the basis of no par-

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ticular church, for no church in this day dare monopolize Christ. He walks the world, and it is the problem of the churches—not with archaic accent and affected voice—to call him back and to follow him; just as do many men and women, not churchgoers, who long for spiritual companionship but dare not seek it where opinions are demanded upon subjects too speculative to appeal to the sincere man.

Again and again this is exemplified in the churches by the throngs that gather about any speaker who exalts Christ's ethic, and who first brings to his hearers even the probability of Christ's mysterious but actual presence. If a speaker does that, his congregation politely ignores his opinions, unless they are very fantastic indeed, for the sake of the spiritual stimulus obtained. But if he fall back on church teaching as such and church authority as such, he attracts only the dim theorists who destroy the human spirit which is the matrix of the divine, the element in which Christ found his followers and from which he called his saints. Church teaching and church authority bless and prosper those upon whom the divine fire has descended, but they make drearier the dreary who are without it. Ignorance of them cannot much harm those who follow independently in the footsteps of the Great Leader and who

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will not enter the churches for fear of being trapped in an opinion or tethered to a law or committed to a practice which does not appeal to reason. Yet I am learning more from churches than ever before, and more and more I am longing to give to churches.

Everyone who knows why wants to learn how, but teachers apparently would rather discuss why than teach how.

Bookshops convince us that people are attempting to compress techniques into books: differentiated violin, piano, voice and saxophone techniques; helpful rules for the making of plays, verse, and the short story. There is a literature on the mastery of horses and on how to guide motors, the correct design and erection of Gothic churches, the acquisition of an engaging social surface and the preservation of a schoolgirl complexion. But when I turned to the thousand and one books written by ethico-religious teachers I found them for or against theological assumptions, or telling why God did this or that, or dealing—with tremendous authority—with the remedial, altruistic, or psychic content of Christ's statements. I avoided Thomas à Kempis, due perhaps to a childish antipathy I could not track to its source, and I disregarded collections of texts which seemed to me a casual and fortuitous guidance for the soul wanting to climb.

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I found almost at once three books which deferred my search for others, as these claimed to direct the mind in constructive religious thought as an approach to higher conduct and the possession of an enlightened happiness.

Ignatius Loyola wrote the first of these and called it *Spiritual Exercises*. It interests us to-day because it is the first consciously attempted psychological alliance with religious sentiment. If the Christian critics of human nature who say it has not changed after nineteen hundred years of admittedly defective companionship with Christ will read that work, they may withdraw an opinion which seems a disloyal pessimism.

The rough draft of *Spiritual Exercises* was made at Manresa—just north of Barcelona in Spain—probably in 1522. It deals with Christ at Bethany and Calvary, and in Loyola's own dawning psychological sense. I have seen it only in its French translation, but it is for the use of priests in dealing with converts and serves to demonstrate to this age that man's realization of God has greatly broadened since Loyola's day and that the Son of man no longer confines his presence to the anchorite's cell or the altar rail, precisely because humanity has widened its search for him. But the fierce sincerity of daily floggings or the seven hours of Loyola's supplication in every twenty-four, or



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his frantic attempts at the materialization of his Lord—in desire so like the attempts of modern “spiritists,” that is, Spiritualists, to materialize lesser spirits—leave the least impressionable reader with his own desire to learn why, with a feeling that here was reality, and a thoughtful wonder as to just what this actuality was. Some of it was Christ himself; more of it was technique; a practiced and matured expression of a curious concept of Christ, limited, crude, and often unlovely. But it has fired many minds and it put iron into the wills of the strange black-robed stoics who passed from Canada into what is now northern New York, in the dawn of European dominance in North America.

Every American schoolchild—Catholic, Jew, or Protestant—learns in his history class about the Canadian Jesuits, of how they baptized the papooses on the sly and at all hazards, however and wherever they were able, marking them with damp and rapid fingers with the sign of the cross, as a ranchman more painfully brands his cattle. But that picture of superstition cannot obscure their heroism, the beauty and justice of their relation to the Indians, nor their distorted but efficacious visualization of divine power, nor the presence of that power itself in response to their demand. Increasing numbers of Americans visit

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Fort Ticonderoga in the growing interest that is felt in our early history, but to many of these visitors Montcalm and Ethan Allen fade for a moment when they remember Jogues—not a great explorer like some other Jesuits, but a man who once passed by Ticonderoga with his captors, the Iroquois, calmly facing martyrdom as a privilege and outfacing them as a stoic. Think with him for a moment as he trod the glory of that now storied land between two lakes. Before him were the fires in the long houses, to be leaped over nightly; they may have begun already to pull out his fingernails; but he beat the Indians at their own game of enduring agony and insult with apparent unconcern. He continued to plan high conduct because he was capable of its performance. Some of his religious concept is archaic and is passing from our world, but his technique was a master's, a matured and practiced expression of his correspondence with Christ. There were many like him, and their minds are the spiritual ancestors of to-day's saints, but tolerance—of which Christ was the protagonist—was not of their spirit.

The second of these three books upon which a spiritual technique has been founded is mixed with opinions demanding of its readers exactly what Loyola demands of his—the closed mind. The advantages of a closed mind are very evident.

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Someone has said that if one keep an open mind, things essential to the acceptance of the system one examines are sure to drop out of it. In Mrs. Eddy's *Science and Health, With Key to the Scriptures*, no chance of that kind has been taken. But from that book and the church that is founded on it a remarkable cult has sprung. It functions and flourishes and possesses—to outsiders—a special biological significance; for the bulk of its pioneer members were middle-aged or elderly, and their membership is, in medical opinion, a revolt against oncoming death and the cessation of the reproductive process. Their items of unmodified creed are that age is an error and disease an illusion.

To other minds it appears that man is presented with a time of religious inclination as distinct as the mating season and as significant. After the race has received its legacy of life from him and the fevers of his passion and possession have produced heirs to our culture and our problems, there comes a special term of sensitized philosophical comprehension. In a purely religious view, after these heirs have been born and nursed and reared, the mind is both freed and prepared for contemplation and companionship with higher things. Received by some persons as a supposition and others as a fact, this view has released waves of hope and of joy and has been demonstrated—per-

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haps unconsciously—by Christian Scientists with a technique that is arresting although it commands a complete surrender of the reasoning faculty as based on to-day's normal premises. It has achieved much, and whether we regard it as contributing to the death rate or as the preventive of invalidism, we are forced to admit that among Christian Scientists are found saints perversely noble and irrationally effective but never incredibly tolerant as was their avowed Master, the Christ.

The third attempt at formulation and practice to the point of technique is that of Troward, and I mean by that the third attempt I have heard spoken of often enough to feel that it has altered and actuated human conduct. It is a transcendental, quasi-intellectual, beautifully tolerant contribution not to be grasped without a lot of time and effort, mores the pity, because it lacks all axiomatic quality. It is noble but hard to remember. It is mentioned here because of its sincerity and despite its vagueness of presentment and also because it evinces a tolerance that has no likeness to indifference. It is lovely but obscure, like far hills on a foggy morning. It repays study.

There may be many other books that construct a technique for the interpretation and practice of Christianity, and there are some people who can construct their own technique from the Gospels.



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If there be other books, I have not heard of them among the many contacts a big city makes for its citizens, and most of the men and women with whom I somewhat shyly debate things religious, are as eager for first steps in a way of thought which crystallizes into a way of life as ever I could be myself. I expected to find that Rudolf Steiner had presented his followers with a method, but I have seen no writing of his which does so, although he turns to a contemplation of Goethe, who was essentially a spiritual master of great power. I repeat my supreme excuse—that the realization that human development is based on human experience and that the highest human experience is correspondence with Christ, has spurred me to try to show the possibility of a technique for those who are tormented with life as it seems to them, or those with the will to believe, or those whose consciousness has been invaded and captured by the power and urgent proximity of Christ. A concentration and a workable, communicable technique must exist if there be a life of the spirit dependent on the interpretation of the philosophy and the mind's actual response to the fact of Christ.

One accepts the quest with abysmal diffidence; not as a self-appointed task, but as the suggestion of a teacher to whom one owes too much to ignore

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the least of his counsels. In spite of a loathing of personal exemplification, one treasures a little hope (like the disc of brilliance to be seen at the far end of a tunnel) that the foundations of one's own new happiness may underlie religious superstructures much nobler. For what seems to the writer the matrix of a possible technique has been attained.

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## Of the Loneliest

IT IS THE LONELIEST, PERHAPS, WHO HAVE THE  
FULLEST HEARTS WHEN THEY FIND THEY ARE  
NOT ALONE

THERE are those who have always known God and who without investigation have accepted the Son of man as the church to which they were born presents him. Others spend their lives searching for the author and master of modern mind—hunting through books new and old, home-brewed and exotic philosophies. They attribute modern mind to Christ's followers but deny his authority through them. They rummage about in the creeds of clergymen and pilfer the opinions of college professors. They cannot trace the lineage of their own leanings. They are intellectually uneasy and conversationally overbearing, as a rule, turning often to the Orient and greeting old, old fallacies as new friends, but they do good by making other people think. There is too a splendid set of men and women who excel in Christian helpfulness. They have Christian opinions, firmly held, but they think vaguely of personal religion as a monkish and perhaps unwhole-

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some thing. The source of their views they have disowned or else it doesn't interest them; they find Jerusalem and—say, Scranton, Pennsylvania—to be identical—bar climate and the minds of churchgoers who perversely associate Jerusalem with a tragedy nineteen hundred years old. They feel that churches keep working people from the country on Sunday without effecting much else, and that old maids and clergymen are interchangeable terms. In the matter of opinions I belonged to these people. It was always time to go home if anyone spoke of religion or of the religious, who seemed to me a tactless, limited lot. Some of them are.

Sometimes as I passed church doors I wondered what people bring out through them to the workaday world. I never read "pious" books, and I felt that it is those who are not resourceful by nature who appeal to God. I modified that view a little when I read a lot of William James aloud to a friend, who admired him. I owe him, as many a Harvard man has owed him, an incalculable debt. His influence is widely diffused to-day, but he proved to me what he has proved to many like me, that it is intellectually sound to seek God—not that I sought him. I was honest in my belief that I was constitutionally incapable of thought, though well able to fancy and to remember. I disclaimed any



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intellectual responsibility, which was—I learned very early in my spiritual strivings—part of my defense mechanism.

When sorrows descended on me like a landslide I experimented with prayer a little. I had been faintly conscious of God as people are who read and love the poets, but a childish experience of church had been very distasteful to me and I believed Christ to be a basis for bitter wrangles wherever he was shown outside of poetry. As life grew more normal and the blackest clouds lifted, I left all religious considerations to the minds who gave time to them and had my secretary write neat notes to kind friends who had sent me spiritualistic books about a future life. I say “a” future life advisedly, because the revelations of the “controls” were not uniform. I didn’t read those books thoroughly, for I had become a widow and the very sight of them made me feel alone. They were all sent at length to a second-hand bookshop. My relief was great. I admit I was unreasonable about them and that my feeling that they slurred the sunshine half a mile was without real justification. A friend took me to church once, but I never went again in town and very rarely in the country. I loved the church building in the country, and I went to church once a season to look at it; from the standpoint of its uses it is as naïve and

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inappropriate as the heart's desire of a fantastic child.

Music still meant something to me, and my son meant more; but he had just entered Harvard, and none but a distrusting mother or an ego-centric maniac would go and live with her son while he is an undergraduate. I had loved and interrogated music all my life. I had always loved Bach. His inventiveness enthralled me. I would study him, through all the unwindings of his colossal gift. He had ever been one of my consecutive interests; he became my problem, my consolation, my way of escape. Life slowly grew more possible and people were so kind; they made me write again and revived my interest in the theater. I rode horses a lot till I was done in and could go to sleep without undressing. I played endless games of bridge till early morning hours. I tried conscientiously not to darken my boy's youth—he was very young, very able, and very sensitive.

As a matter of fact, my friends arranged my life and I acquiesced, except in the major matter of music, which I had just enough initiative to study as a person half asleep will stubbornly keep at a book. But the old love of it held, and the men who taught me knew nothing about me and cared less, which was a comfort to me. Their steadiness and thorough method were just what I could ad-

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mire. If life hurt less, it was because through them and their exposition of a lovely thing, as through my son's friendliness, it had been mitigated. I thanked time that it somehow passed.

I looked at myself as one looks at the pericarp on a vine branch in the autumn. Bloom had passed, seed had scattered to bring on the drama of new growth, but—I was the pericarp—the old protective casing that endured, outliving its function, its stem still rigid, its shape still discernible. Its only possible destiny was a place in a winter bouquet on a club mantel shelf. For me, as for it, life was over except as a saddening influence. Perhaps I—not being completely vegetable—might still make some response to youth should it demand or question, but I knew my greatest service would be to stand out of its way.

From somewhere I got the courage to seem gay. I knew that tears are a mistake: that they only quench youth's fires. My tolerable time was spent with music, my good hours with Bach. One evening in the country stands out in my mind because it was the point of departure. I think of it as one might think of the ground upon which one has built a house. It is from the ground of that evening that I still overlook the world.

There had been, or was to be, a congress of philosophers at one of our great universities, a sort

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of symposium; and people I knew were asking these highly specialized foreigners to dine, so that a pleasant familiarity with them grew up in our own and neighboring households. Their last appearance was to be at dinner in a house whose hospitality is simple and whose interests are beauty. They were all there, freed from the summer courses they had been giving at Yale and Harvard. They hailed principally from Oxford and Cambridge and were easy, kindly people, very knowledgeable and reflective and very anxious to know what people really thought, to the point of belief; in other words, what really actuates mankind, in its present phase; how much of it will hold over into the next! One of them spoke of American optimism, its boldness, and of the phenomenon of the second blooming. I didn't know what he was talking about at first, but he told me that it was observable in our country that the elderly possessed an extraordinary vigor and initiative and that many of them spent it in the repetition of experiences appropriate to the twenties and the imitation of an earlier self. He felt this to be unbalanced and to show lack of purpose or of demanding cultural pursuit. They seemed agreed that it was an alarming thing to find men of sixty still in strength, attempting to reconstruct the youthful ego. They believed that the second



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blooming could be the life's best expression if impulse could be joined to a proper pattern, a real spiritual sympathy and its unaffected expression. I had heard that American life burned men out very young, and I felt that there were a confusing number of patterns. But they didn't. They felt that the infinite variety of human personality had deceived me about that. They took the Christ pattern and exhibited its approximation in the behavior and mental attitude of actors in the Victorian drama of English progress who riotously proclaimed themselves freed from "Paulist bias." Then they took men who explained their impulses on a sex basis after communing with Freud and his amplifiers. They spoke of their unpatterned impulses, and the real lack of lift in their march, going forward in energy often but not going up in quality very much. They felt what we all acknowledge—that speed isn't progress, since it often ignores direction.

I stayed late. It was a nice party and I hated to have it over, but I felt that flaming youth was enough of a problem without adding the period of second blooming. I felt very solemn about humanity when I recalled the things they had said about the lack of balance in the minds of to-day and I hated to think that I might repeat my own youthful fevers and follies. But I read a few of the

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books they mentioned, and to-day I am of a strong and cheering opinion—and I owe it to them. I believe that we do come to a time of spiritual response and religious inclination, race-wide and inevitable. Such a time is waiting for everybody who reaches middle life, and to those who have received their spiritual sight in youth it is clarification; to those whose sight has been dim to the point of darkness it is amazing vision. “At eventide there shall be light” is no longer without its biological connotation.

But I didn't work this out in a day, I hadn't the interest to do it except as a pastime. I had no religious training because I never would accept any. I had no sectarian predisposition except a fancy for Quakers, largely because they didn't talk at an appointed time if they had nothing special to say. I didn't know any Quakers personally although I am half of Quaker stock. I had arrived at that appointed time when a lifelong correspondence with Christ clarifies into a more positive possession for those who have long known him, but when any human being may put forth new green, like Tannhäuser's staff, even if he has not leafed out in youth.

It is a time, if only some thought of God call loudly enough, when the mind, with new vigor and a gratitude for the sense of truth, of reality, grows

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up and out toward the purpose and presence of Christ. It is a trysting time of each generation with the highest revelation its mind can receive. It is a special hearing for the living word, be it familiar or be it news—good news. This special hearing has a definite place in the life cycle. It does not determine temperament, like the impressions of childhood, but it determines action, far-reaching and decisive, backed by the authority of age in its early phase. If the mind isn't called in maturity to a higher level than that on which it has functioned before, we get the piteous picture of longing that still functions on the reproductive basis, that still responds to the biological urge. The familiar tale of old men who are all for home and family until their relentless fifties, when they make themselves ludicrously prominent with pretty ladies of uncertain standing, is the second blooming gone wrong. I had come within earshot of the great message, and it came to me in a form I could accept.

There was a week in the February of that year that I had set aside to hear the *Nibelungen Ring*. I was arranging all dates to listen to the cycle from the first note of the *Rheingold* to the last chord of the "*Götterdämmerung*." I hadn't heard it as a whole for four years. I looked forward to it, I knew every note and word of Erda's part and of

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the haunting Rhinemaidens' choruses but I studied Siegfried's rôle curiously. I enjoyed the definite atmosphere of lust and love philters, the primal quality of magic and murder, dark forests and darker hearts, of responsible dragons and insinuating forest fowls. And the music flowed in an enchanted stream round every act of strife and of mating. My theory teacher talked about it and we studied the score. I went to an amusing house party with it under my arm, preparing for the operas with enthusiasm. To placate an anti-Wagnerian neurologist we wrote Freudian comments on the text all Sunday morning. Some of them were really amusing. But the conclusion we all came to was that if Wagner hadn't attempted the impossible, he could never have achieved so much. We were steeped in the whole thing and followed the performances rapt in their musical significance. If ever Wagner had a whole-hearted hearing he got it from us. As the curtain fell on the darkness and despair of the "Götterdämmerung" it would have taken more than a glimpse of a rainbow bridge to cheer us. I remember saying a line from Swinburne's "Ballad of Burdens," "Death is the end of every man's desire." I wonder if Paul recalled the physical aspects of the Damascus road just before the brightness and the voice. Because I recall so vividly the last scene



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of the last hour that I was to spend as a lonely woman conspiring with time for its passing.

It was frightfully cold outside the opera house and we waited there with a group of friends for the motor to come up. When we got into it, the friend with whom I had heard the whole cycle asked me if I felt depressed. I remember we decided it would be a poor compliment to Wagner if we felt anything else. She felt so blue that she meant to play a few records of Schubert before she slept and I meant to read Jane Austen, for whose wit and many graces I cherish an abiding appreciation. I went up in the elevator in the apartment house where I live miles away from it, my mind still busy with the music. I opened the door of my apartment and made for the blazing fire in the living room. I had told my maid not to wait up for me. When I was warmed, I looked in my bedroom; the windows were wide open and the air was icy. I undressed in the next room, the last burst of orchestral glory vibrating almost physically in my memory. I got into bed as quickly as possible only to realize that all Miss Austen's stories were in the living room. My night table was laden with volumes of American history but I was too relaxed in one part of me and too taut in another to make history agreeable reading; it was too cold to get up again. I put out my hand

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for a little green book someone had given me. It was called *The Christ of the Indian Road*. I knew nothing of it nor its author; it had been lying there for days. I didn't know if it were a "pious" book or one of those dreary screeds designed to show that everybody is pretty bad but that Christians are incorrigible. One reads lots of those, especially in German.

I began that book suspiciously, ready to put it down at every sentence. I nearly did so—it seemed at the very beginning preachy but sincere. Gilbert's lines flared in my memory; I remember laughing aloud at them. They are in the Bab Ballads:

"My mind is not so blank  
As that of Hopley Porter  
Who holds a curate's rank  
At Asses-Milk-Cum-Water."

Those lines were the tag of the old me; they're good lines and provide an honorable exit.

After that I was alone with the book, no longer detached, but of it.

"I AM THE DOOR," AND EVERYONE WHO IS A PART OF  
CHRIST IS ALSO A PORTAL

Sometimes as I read—just at first—I felt astonishment that such thoughts appealed to me, amazed that I was so touched by them, so kindled.

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I read it all very humbly, very gratefully. I had forgotten the cold. I put on a heavy dressing gown and looked from my window upon a world in darkness, unrevealed but actual—a symbol of the world that for the first time I wanted to know—the world of minds informed of God; what I think pious people call the Kingdom, the fabric of faith. It lay in darkness before my mind's eye, as the squares of the city's houses did. But I knew it was there. I was terribly stirred and went into the living room to sit before the fire—a flat bed of livid coals now.

I said, "Be calm about this thing." I tried to make out what had moved me, possibly the intensity of the writer. What had moved him? Was I getting an impression of his mental image—the image of Christ—re-enforced or weakened by his personality—was he a plus or minus proposition when it came to the presentment of his concept? His spirit was intense and rare! Stevenson's phrase covered him. But why was he intense; what was it all about? The Christ idea as he presented it possessed a beauty that went to my heart. With such an idea incorporated in one's intelligence the "soul could be far in the gardens of Paradise, though one stood in the shambles of death." I longed very much to possess such an idea permanently. I had no perfectly clear sense of what I

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had been reading about. I wanted to be lent this man's actuating thought for a moment that I might include in my own mind process the things that I felt but couldn't formulate. (I had not then read Loyola and Eddy and Troward.) I sat there wonderingly turning the matter over in my mind. It was then that Christ's presence shone within me—I knew myself to be a thought in his mind. No sight or sound announced it, no vision and no voice; but a bright hour rose from the wet and dark of the sleeping city. In a new sense of protection I dared face thoughts from which I habitually ran away and dared review tragedies by the light of a defined and increasing radiance. When the first stirrings of the household came and I went back to bed, I prayed; prayed that I might never forget or vulgarize that lovely hour. I looked for the writer's name on the little green book. It was Jones. I feared that some too sentimental hymn or text in the key of Huxley's despised "effulgent piety" would assail my mind when I woke and that was one reason I prayed that my shining hour might never tarnish.

I dreaded to hear retrospectively a vulgar anthem or an inhuman hymn. Because as a child I had heard hymns, and they had stuck in my memory with their forcibly adhesive quality; so I knew that they have an associative power and the capac-

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ity to draw to one's attention the circumstances under which they were first heard and the very sound of the voices that—within one's recollection—first uttered them. To put it tersely, they never returned alone to the memory. Later in my life I had substituted for an alto in a big city church and I derisively knew Doctor Watts' "See how we grovel here below," and the "There is no health in us" of the Episcopal general confession. (I paid special attention to these things, I remembered, when I was making a collection of "whines and snivels" for the bass in the choir—a gay soul who never once thought of the sense of any thing he sang.) The collects in the Episcopal prayer book seemed to me beautiful enough to offer God as prayers, and I determined to buy a prayer book when I went out and try to build a soul with it. I slept for an hour or two and woke in strong sunshine. A beautiful memory woke with me—of a church song of Bach's. It is little known and for high voice, so that I hadn't thought of it for years, but it seemed a gift to me, it was quite my "case"—institutional, impersonal, and damnable word—I faced the world with that song on my lips. It has become the most sacred of songs to me and it is one of the loveliest.

That day was a curiously bright one for me. It is indistinct in my remembrance, confused and



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happy in its wearisome formal lunch party and its exciting informal dinner. I had the annual report to get out for a school I loved, but under all those things was the shining hour. I wanted more energy, more driving power. I felt I could neither absorb nor give out as a skilled believer could; I realized that I hadn't a Christian vocabulary and that church people are very sensitive about words. There was a fifty-fifty arrangement about that, for I think lots of people distrust church terms as mere verbiage. At luncheon that very day I sat next a bishop's wife, who asked me about training church choirs, and I was very careful not to hurt her feelings, although musically she was nonsensical. I had the thing that mattered, however, the amazing sureness that Christ is, that the world's improvement is due to him, that all who work for the world's improvement are—in Chaucer's lovely phrase—"of his Companie." It was a day of many contacts, and pleasant ones, for I found that mine was a communicable happiness, that it grew with giving; and I had a stricken presentiment that I would lose it if I didn't live worthy of it. It was raining when I drove home at midnight and all the churches were dark. If one had been open I should have crept in, I am sure. It seemed to me very arbitrary to have all the churches closed at the same hours. It does so still.

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The impulse to go to church passed, and—not to risk my new possession—by the next day I had decided against it. I had hated it as a child. My mother had suggested my being confirmed and I had not had stamina enough to fight the proposal. I was one of a collection of young people who withstood the tearful appeals of our rector twice a week throughout Lent. My heart and my feet were heavy as the hour approached for this alleged instruction. Nursery ethics were hopelessly violated one day by his telling us a long yarn about how bad his brother was, an iniquity which began by his rebellion against church. To children whose Scotch-Irish nurses had taught them that disloyalty to one's own is the lowest crime of all, this narration was dramatically "dirty." I, of course, made tremendous capital of it and was in no frame of mind to discuss or accept what was offered of beauty in a preparation which seems to me to-day as remote from ideal as was the method of the Vicar's wife in *The Way of All Flesh* when she prepared the parlor maid for the same rite by teaching her the geography of Palestine. I gave up all connection with the church as quickly as possible.

But since my stroll on the Indian Road I wanted to be of Christ's company. I wanted, for the first time, to live in harmony with his teaching. I even

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wanted to go to church—if I were sure it were right and if I shouldn't lose him in what was said of him. (I had many real doubts about its being right.) I wrote to the author of *The Christ of the Indian Road* and told him how much I was indebted to him. That seemed an honest thing to do. I realized that what I thought wouldn't mean very much to him, but that I thought it intensely enough to go on record as thinking it at all was what spurred me to do it.

Something very like thought had begun in my mind. I tried conscientiously to account for my experience on a basis of hallucination. I was defeated in that attempt by recurrent impressions and a sort of basic and fearless happiness, so new, so actual, that it stood out as the memorial of my shining hour. I read life by the new light; I conceived and performed a few things that were fair-minded and loving. I read the Bible sometimes, and I looked over the "pious" books of preceding generations in the family libraries—they were ignoble in the spirit of to-day although one saw plainly that this present day is their emotional and ethical descendant. One of them was called *Quakerism Not Christianity*. I took to the poets again.

My unspoken grievance became in retrospect the fact that there are no schools for those who are

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converted; and after I had read all about conversion in an article on Florentine art, I had come to the conclusion that I was converted, for I was very much changed. I was communicably happy, but I could not forget that even habitual daydreamers cease planning what they cannot perform. I wanted to pray, and praise, and practice in the light of my new knowledge. It was such a real thing that I felt it could be demonstrated if I only had a technique. I wanted the address of someone who could do for Christianity what Franz Liszt had done for the pianoforte; create and exemplify a technique. Christianity had developed as had the pianoforte. Harpsichord facility wasn't enough to evoke the modern sonorities necessary in to-day's immense auditoriums for the rendition of modern music, nor was the kind of religious experiment and expression that I knew adequate to the demands my life would certainly make upon it.

Who was I to determine a technique and who was there to teach me? If I were to talk to the clergymen I sometimes met, they would probably suggest altar guilds or Sunday-school teaching, but I felt that I wanted to be taught myself and I wasn't sure that I could sympathize offhand with the churchy activities of Christians deeply rooted in ecclesiastical conventions. I was willing to go

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slowly but I didn't want to make false steps and lose my impulse to keep on.

After a lot of thought I wrote again to Doctor Jones. I didn't know anything about him but I took the chance of finding him like the personality behind his book. I wasn't afraid of him and I didn't believe that he would be derisive or contemptuous. I told him how much I lacked energy and how really I wanted the technique of a religious person. The letter that he sent me in reply has meant a great deal to me, for through it I realized that in some mysterious way I could come before the Lord with thanksgiving, that there was power there for me to take, and that my desire for a subconsciousness that responded to conscious Christian determination was a normal attainable desire if one were simple enough about it. I wanted to school my spirit and I accepted Doctor Jones' suggestions as the germ of a process that is still expanding and that began in happiness and thanks; with the assurance, specifically unsought, that within the veil of our limitations is Christ with whom actual correspondence according to individual capacity is feasible. There are people who have lived in that knowledge their lives through, but to me it was a discovery, a brilliant amazement.

Doctor Jones wrote that the man with the



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withered hand revived its energy somewhere in the process of obedience to Christ's command to stretch it forth. I felt that if I tried, I might achieve a re-enforcement of will by the mere fact of response to the force I felt pulling me. I saw that it was possible to the mind to which I had appealed to conceive of Christ's response in terms of energy. I began to think of the brain's co-operation with an image in the mind, for I had learned to look upon the mind as the psychic part of the brain—the most difficult step in the whole progression. "Psychic" is a word that has a vagueness of significance amounting almost to vacuity in the understandings of those who wish to be released from the old-time admission that man possesses a soul as distinguished from the brain, the mind, or the will. I felt that mind and soul were practically the same—I wanted to get started, not to split hairs. Doctor Jones felt that one ought to be very simple in dealing with attempted religious progress, that it was as simple as the forming of a friendship, and he suggested that I read the gospel twenty minutes a day, and brood on it. I am thankful that it never entered my head to criticize or defy his suggestions; he had opened the door for me to a new and shining world, and I believed that he knew how to live in it—I didn't. I had taken a little Testament with me to the country and every evening

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before I dressed for dinner I went to my room and read it. Or, when I drove over long country distances to dine, I let other people do the talking and attempted the brooding process. If I dined at home, I didn't appear below stairs until it was the actual time of one's guests' arrival, or the exact time to begin the meal. Nobody noticed it, not even the servants. I always smoked as I read my shabby little Testament, which I had possessed so long and read so little. Smoking was an involuntary activity of mine—except before breakfast or after I went to bed. So in clouds of Turkish tobacco I made my first attempt to achieve religious facility. I am almost glad to-day that I had that habit. I began it when I was very young, and through its abandonment I was to learn that mind processes aimed at correspondence with Christ leave physical mistakes far behind them—like trains leaving railway stations for the happy places of release and vacation. My excessive smoking was a physical mistake.

I began to realize increasingly that my experience was not entirely internal and subjective. Often, when I listened to my boy and his friends chatting in the garden, the sense of an actual and accessible Christ would arrest me with its heart-searching joy, with its element of sudden question. What am I to do with this knowledge? was a ques-

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tion I threw back again. I felt like the destination of a misaddressed letter—if one can fancy its having sensations of its own. This beautiful brilliance isn't meant for me, I thought; someone will come along presently and take it back to its rightful owner.

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## Fumbling at the Latch

FUMBLING AT THE LATCH, STUMBLING ON THE PATH,  
THE DOOR IS OFTEN OPENED FROM WITHIN

MY fumbling and first attempts at a technique were such that I could fancy other people succeeding in them although I could not. Any alto who reads the soprano's part in a quartet will know what I mean. They were too high for me—I simply hadn't the voice for the songs I wanted to sing and I wanted to sing them only because I had heard of them, just as one might want to read the last mystery story because one's companions spoke of it, even if one knew it to be drivel. I hadn't the voice to sing hymns, but I reflected that very few singers had made a career of hymns alone. "What are the songs you really want to sing?" I asked myself. I wanted to be a Christian person, without the conventional bunkum, or that half-baked desire to tell everybody all about everything whether one really understands it or not—something that I had noticed in the practice of some of the "doctrinaires" who discourse religiously at inappropriate intervals. I kept repeating my question, "What is the song you want to sing?" As an

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early result of the brooding process I found a contrapuntal quality in human conduct religiously undertaken—I discovered that solo work is infrequent. *Te Deum Laudamus* expressed in life and character is concerted, one neither and nevermore lives nor dies to oneself—one pursues the excitement of approximating a pattern of converging lines.

And then quite suddenly I realized what any Christian should know well—that no first contacts with Christ are identical, although everyone tries to show that the contact for which he or she is so justly grateful is the usual access to new life and association with the Son of man. That is one of life's little ironies and the practice of many otherwise selfless human beings. "No one cometh to the Father save like me" is a poisonous perversion of a big truth. Those who have found him in the world cannot bear that others find him in the church, and vice versa. No first contacts with Christ are identical even if ill-considered and sentimental religious speeches make them seem so. There are only a few real situations between God and the mind of man, but the avenues leading to them are as infinite as human temperament. There is a likeness in effect but a grand diversity in approach.

My first conscious exercise in religious technique was to classify my own contact with Christ by read-



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ing up all first contacts in the four Gospels. Then, not choosing the one I most liked but the one most like mine, I lived through it for a period of emulation. I pictured it, breathed it, was bounded and led by it; and, at the end of an arbitrary period—the month of July—I looked with astonished gratitude at what I had gained by it. If I were an instructor in the religious life, I should get my pupils to collect the beginnings of friendship with Christ, with reference to the different ages in which they were made—I have done that a little lately and I think I have learned a lot. The contact most like mine was that of Nicodemus.

But at this time I turned over the pages of all first meetings with Christ in the years of his ministry, realizing but not lingering over the hordes of wisemen that have been led to him by the star of reasoning, the brightness of rhetoric. For I am not wise, I rarely reasoned, and rhetoric, as such, makes me very restless. The wiseman's approach was not mine.

I absorbed first contacts and did what nine women out of ten do when they buy clothes—I took away with me what I liked, not what I could best use, with the resulting and unnecessary activity of returning to the source of supply to effect an exchange. I was interested by the amount of time Christ gave to these first interviews; that alone

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would have made me feel their importance. When he sat by Jacob's well, he suffered what seemed to be the minimum interruption from his disciples, and, except he put forth specific remedial power, he used a method of comparison and analogy in speaking with people at first, a method which takes a great deal of time. His punitive impulses were remedial and in the nature of spiritual surgery. They are hardly for the imitation of the tyro, but they appeal overwhelmingly to the destructive type of zealot. They and their application should be classed among the Christian mysteries by those at the threshold of the spirit's schooling. They were infrequent but fascinating to the dogmatist and tyrant. The specifically remedial contacts with Christ—I mean his miracles of physical healing—touched me, but not as my own need. I was vigorous and happy now and I didn't dare spend much time on them. I went on thinking of the punitive impulse that eventuated in his outstanding contact in the Temple, inconclusively, knowing that there was a lot to be developed from that scene and that I wasn't fit to develop it, but was interested and concerned with it. I forced my mind to continue my search for a contact with him in the gospel most nearly like my own in contemporary life.

My favorite first meeting in all the record was

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that of Andrew and Peter with Christ. It is ideal, and outwardly was not unlike what was happening in my own house among the many young men who came and went in it. In the sound of their voices and even of their laughter that scene automatically reconstructed itself, as though the mind were quicker than light and could recapture actual images. It did recapture the emotional content, the productive outgoing of awed yet eager minds to the mind's master. In America's early summer "Come and see" is shouted from hospitable houses and wide-open universities; it is the time of inspection, and even topographical exploitation incites steamship companies and railroads to scream "Come and see!" An instructor from Harvard the day he left our house for his own said to a boy who admired him profoundly and who inquired where he lived exactly what Christ said to Saint Andrew, without thought of quotation or paraphrase. I saw for an illuminating moment the friendships of young men in the light of a co-operative ministry so great that the churches cannot contain it—a ministry that began in a direct question from a prepared mind and a simple response from the greater spirit we know. In that light the hospitality of one young man to another ought to seem a far bigger thing than it does. This coming of Saint Andrew from the strength of John the Bap-

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tist to the stronghold of the saints swept over me with its simplicity. His wasn't my own approach, but I had seen the brothers come just as the Christian ages have seen them, and I looked at them again and again as—when I was last in Venice—I used to drop in day after day to look at Titian's "Presentation of the Virgin." The brothers had prepared minds; they understood; their technique was so perfect that they seem not to have any.

It was all beyond me, but I stood idly watching them because they are a great spiritual spectacle, and it took me some time to realize that admiration without emulation makes a man a Boswell of the spiritual kingdom, a recorder of detail. If he lacks the will or the skill even to record, he is just nothing at all; his worship might even become weariness. There is such a thing as a psychological pageant, and the writer of the problem novel lives on it. The readers of the problem novel—and of the Gospels—stand at gaze while emotions and predispositions and inhibitions pass by in review. These substitute in an ever-lessening degree such emotions as they happen to fancy for their own feelings; but if they are not returned to the world of actualities as action, they cannot be classed as very positive sympathies or very constructive forces. Sometimes, for weal or woe, they are both those; but if a mind takes on the habit of

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looking on at emotions, predispositions, and inhibitions without actual response in action, it loses its initiative. It forfeits its reactionary function (oratorically), it dies. Knowing that, I dared not dwell over long on the first contacts with Christ that I merely enjoyed.

But I had learned that the predisposition of the brothers belongs to those whose talent is for truth, whose mental, innate sense is of real values. Such men are teachable in the highest degree; they become the inner brotherhood of scholarship, administrators of science and of philosophy, custodians of Christ's truth. Pasteur was one of them, for he felt truth and acted on it beyond the point of actual proof. None can imitate minds so endowed; it would be dangerous if we did. But it must be admitted that they exist and are called, rather patronizingly, single-minded; and that they are of the Spirit of Truth—the Comforter that Christ designated and that his church has often persecuted. There are still such men in the forefront of modern science and the domain of constructive thought.

I spent a long unproductive time thinking of the Spirit of Truth, the Comforter. I wondered what the fashionable distortion of that promise is and was in other ages. To a mind not ecclesiastically implicated—by that I mean a fresh and



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unsophisticated intelligence reading the Gospels because they are beautiful—the spirit of truth and the noblest scientific attitude would seem the same. Humanity has been comforted by science. But for the most part science is the result of concentrations of learning at places whose foundations were laid by Cistercians, etc., as memorials or witnesses of the life of Christ or of his “Companie.” All this was like static in the radio; it attracted one’s attention without advancing one’s understanding. I was glad when I could get away from the thoughts emerging from it. They were stupid thoughts that everyone has and that lead nowhere except they occur in very great or very small minds. In the latter they lead to a lot of half-baked monologue. I was in the grip of a thousand silly conjectures every evening when the boys stopped playing games with me and went off to sleep long before I could. “These ideas are not the matter in hand,” I would say, only to be the receiving station of a lot more of them. But one morning I woke without them and looked again, long and longingly at this great portrait, thinking more of the personality it perpetuated than the technique which achieved its perpetuation. But before I turned from this terse story of Saint Andrew’s approach with Peter I saw in them two perfect religious expressionists. I did turn away

lest I become like the young musician who spends his own practice hours listening to Kreisler, neglecting to touch the finger-board of his own instrument with his own unskilled left hand. Except as a critic—and perhaps not even that—can he become technically expert by such means. I had learned, however, that the brothers had wrung from the situation the essentials of Christian practice. In that I had been guided by the young musicians. They had answered when they were called, they had openly rejoiced in their Leader, and Andrew had brought his brother. The lesson I had learned as I left their story was the necessity of an acknowledgment of the authority one feels. My spiritual exercise must then be directed to the development of my capacity for respect. It is no light task for a mocking mind to deepen its sense of respect, much less to learn to love a lesson that is hard.

My technical lesson began consciously with an investigation of respect as such. It is the backbone of homage. It is not always involuntary, although it can be in minds of established standards. I had to learn where honor was due as well as how to bestow it. People in touch and sympathy with churches have none of that bothersome business to go through; they score heavily just there. I had to educate my sense of admiration,

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train it to the recognition of the finer developments. I felt dashed at the outset, for I found all about me—with my new sense of values—a perverse appreciation of the second rate, a manipulated publicity that morons may be counted on to mistake for fame, a betrayal of talent to exploitation, and a substitution of sex for God.

I felt a little blue at the thought of respect; it appeared as a paralyzed emotional function of the modern world, something that the mocking mind had sloughed off, that hardly belonged to this day and era. Young people have written me that they have good voices but that there is no one within hundreds of miles to teach them singing; I knew so well now how they felt.

Within my house Descartes was being read. The weather had turned cold and rainy and the young men sagged in big chairs or stretched out on sofas. There were three little brown volumes of the French philosopher and in French and English *Discours de la Methode* was being absorbed. One scientific youth politely volunteered to read it aloud to me; he was thrilled by it as the first book of philosophy he had ever read. It thrilled me too, for it was an exposition of the technique of cogent thinking—it dovetailed with my quest providentially; it was what I had been praying for. He had no idea as he read to me that he was answer-

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ing question after question that had arisen in my mind. When Descartes points out that a man who goes slowly on the direct road progresses faster than one who diverges and returns with rapidity, I got the idea for my own progression—my slogan of “Don’t digress; keep straight ahead until you have worked out some sort of technique.” I took a little volume up to bed with me, my heart leaping at such a find. I could respect this man whose thought deepened my sense of authority; suggesting and perhaps proving the existence of God to my son and his friends with a book published in 1637. Descartes’ voice reached them above the ballyhoo of behaviorists in its last undisputed crescendo that summer, penetrating deeper than the egocentric sex search of the spurious Freudians. With Descartes at my elbow I continued my study of first contacts with Christ. I recalled phrases in *The Christ of the Indian Road* that had been keys to unlock doors into new spaces of reformed desire. As a spiritual exercise I began, when people praised things, to ask them why—to attempt a spiritual discipline in aiming at the respect of other people’s better sympathies. Dependent on mood I had often ridiculed them, so this began more or less as a penance. The desirability of penance is deeply ingrained in the mind of man; it can be worked into an enervating morbidity.

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To keep penance from its malign function of self-torture it must be tied up to human service, and as a means to that end I formulated a practice of diplomatically evoking the best expressions of the best sympathies of those with whom I came in contact. I found that few people have opinions, that most of them are as incapable of consecutive thought as I am myself, and that the process of substitution—the planting of a good impulse in the place of a bad one—is a thing in which one gains skill with practice if one eschews argument. I had a friend upon whom I practiced. (My son said with justice that she was an infernal bore.) My penance was to allow her to get rid of a devastating image that obsessed her by talking it away. If I had argued with her I should have dammed up her adverse image, driven it in. I offered it no apparent opposition but guided her mind to the exit of unworthy sympathies by questions asked in as disarming a fashion as I could master. I was much more experimental and humble in my quest than I am in its narration and I was appalled at the dependence of mind on mind. I did not know that she was under treatment for a nervous excitability that evinced itself in excessive scolding of her husband, her daughter, and her spiritless secretary. I felt floods of happy surprise when her husband forwarded to me a letter from her neurologist



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saying how greatly his wife had improved under the application of mind processes borrowed from the psalms and suggesting that I be encouraged to develop for use in possible emergencies my theory of substituted excitements. I didn't know till then that I had a theory of substituted excitements, but I think I must have had. I told him how I approached her and strained off the egotism from her very active mind. As a result of all this the poor husband was able to go peacefully abroad with his family, and he has absolutely distanced me as a student of mind process. They are both substantial supporters of the Neurological Institute and experts in the mind process psalms. They were basically Christian, so I couldn't do any shining evangelical job on their souls, even supposing I were able. But I think I got them to realize early in the attempt that psychology as we employ it can be most successful as a study in the application of the power of God. The power itself is inexplicable to-day, and if we delegate such authority to the neurologists, as some clergymen disastrously do, we're going to get a few half-baked theorists who fancy themselves in the scientific category and who cease to draw on the causative impulsion because their attention has been diverted to the deepening of effect; they won't get any effect if their sense of process overlays the cause.

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I unwittingly kept another woman from changing churches—which mortified me not a little. If I had no great sympathy with any particular church myself, it seemed pretty cheap to be choosing one for someone else. Again I was appalled by the dependence of mind on mind; it is the communion of saints or it is the threshold of the madhouse, depending, of course, on the minds. I longed for a correspondence with likeminded people, and this longing led me to get those about me to speak of their inner lives and spiritual correspondences. I found in them all desire for the expression of high things, but I found also my own fears that a formulated technique for the use of the modern religious did not exist. These churchgoers all called themselves old-fashioned. I couldn't suggest the study of Descartes to them; they read for sensation only. They were uncritical about books, and would choose their religion as they chose their friends—because they inexplicably liked it. We all do that. Two of them felt a superstitious dread of the Bible brought about by mandatory relatives who had maneuvered isolated texts for their juvenile suppression. To every one of them some one thing in the religious representation seemed misrepresented. Prudishness of the most perverse virulence existed side by side with secret sex absorption in one cousin of

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mine, and soon I found that I was taking few of my friends as a whole, but was loving them for a specialty—one rode with me, another read with me, and I tried to get to them on a broader basis, to accept them in their entirety. They loved to amuse themselves with self-evident fictions; the animosity of certain busy people who never thought of them at all being a very prevalent fiction with some of them. Numbers of the leisure class would rather represent themselves as disliked than ignored.

Such things filled my mind as it was turning from Andrew and Peter to the woman of Samaria. I turned to that next because, although it wasn't my approach, it might conceivably be that of one of my dearest friends—one of my queerest friends as well. She was perhaps the most promiscuous and predatory female I had ever met, but when she returned to America she always spent a week with me. I never would have turned her loose in a trusting community, but I loved her. When her mind was impersonally active it was charming; she had been protected by distinguished connections and by money, but she had made as much trouble as one woman can. She had a room next mine and hated the boys. As I began to think of her I added the practice of longing for her a cleansed perception of life, whenever I felt the presence of

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Christ's power. That was my intensest prayer, and I still pray it. It began my daily spiritual exercise whose typical hour would begin between the time I came into the garden in the morning and the arrival of the letters. She never came down till lunch time and has remained her unaltered self.

My second prayer and my conscious effort would be to walk the paths that thread the gospel so close to Christ that I might recognize him at once when I met him in the minds of my friends, the pages of my books, or the silence of my own waiting heart. I asked of him as the needs of our own war-wilted era, energy, gayety, and love. Energy that I might work for him, gayety that I might make friends for him, love that I might understand both him and them. One longs for a friend—in need, but gayety is the basis of most companionship. Brightness attracts the eye in the very nature of vision. Gayety attracts sympathy in the very nature of emotion. Solemnity is beautiful when it is impersonal and induces incidental and impressive gravity, as when one contemplates Gothic vistas or the inevitability of death. But personal solemnity is worse than any amount of calculated sprightliness; it is usually mere priggishness. Sometimes it is self-importance, or it may cover a bewildered sense of injustice. Lots of good friends are poor

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companions because they will be solemn about nothing more important than themselves. Solemnity when it is personal is a cumbrous egotism. Thus—I asked for gayety advisedly. Anyone who has been remotely touched by Christ's mind knows why I asked for love. I waited for a response to my prayer, for the sense that my thought had been received, that there is something external and objective in this correspondence whose internal, subjective process man has begun to tabulate. I was very sure that attempted divine intercourse has the same fault as attempted human intercourse. Christ himself has no opportunity of revelation to the petitioner of riotous egotism who does all the talking himself. The clamor of demand and self-revelation is not the whole of prayer. Pray, and cease, expectantly silent. The good talker must learn to be a good listener—that is proverbial. And equally so the good petitioner must learn to listen.

After prayer I practiced putting myself into the emptiness of a consciousness bent upon its response. Have you never waited for the doctors to come out of the sick room with an opinion? Have you never waited by the telephone for a message that meant much? If you have, you know the emptiness of a consciousness bent upon response. Suspense is the novel writer's name for



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it, but it is an intense noun that has worn itself thin.

I found these hints for a religious technique at this time while waiting for some response to prayer, and their value remains as time passes. Never put words in Christ's mouth even if they be words once uttered for your good. Don't try too hard to recapture former religious experience; religious experience is progressive. You will find your thought process cleansed and the basis of decisions, the point of departure for a fresh climb toward the Highest. You will receive strength in that way. Don't dilute it with a prolonged demand. This is all the subjective part of prayer and not exactly its answer. George Meredith has said something like, "He who rises from his knees a better man his prayer is answered;" subjectively, yes; objectively, no.

At this time I often thought of my shining hour. In the desire of repeated assurance I did what all beginners do—I tried to make it return. I envied people who went to church, thinking that the church service was in itself a means of illumination. It can be, of course, but not as I found it then, and I was trying to make my shining hour a top growth and not a root. I wanted it to be a blossom in itself, not the radix of bloom. I went to a High-Church Episcopal service and found it

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almost barbaric. The singing was incessant and unbelievably bad. I couldn't detach my mind from the unfortunate ceremonial detail. Worshipping God in beauty and in truth was not made to apply to phrasing and pitch on that occasion. The sermon was ignoble. When I got home, I wouldn't say that I disliked it, although my going to church had aroused the interest of my young guests, one of whom is an habitual churchgoer. I had to fight my soreness and disappointment when I was eagerly asked for my impressions. I had a miserable luncheon trying to keep my mind on the topics that came and went and equally trying to wring some comfort out of what had been two hours of unexampled ugliness within church walls. I loved Christ so much; I liked his church so little. I was bitterly disappointed.

The clergyman had evidently seen me in his congregation, for he came in to call late that afternoon. His mere presence caused the young men to evaporate with a noiselessness amounting to skillful stealth. He asked me very pleasantly—as an item of light seaside chatter—if I believed in the “validity of orders.”

I tried hard to understand and sympathize with his expressions and fell back on the age-old method of asking him how he had achieved his belief in the validity of orders himself. I further demanded

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that he define validity. He meant, of course, the actuality of apostolic succession, but although I had read about that in history books I made him go through the whole thing, that I might fight the surge of anger I felt at having the boys routed and my thoughts turned into unsympathetic channels. He had a grand time for twenty minutes with the early fathers and the alleged popular return to something he called Catholic practice. At the end I told him very nicely that I had never previously considered these questions and wasn't equipped to discuss them. Instead I offered for his consideration the latest French plays and loaded him up with them as he departed.

I was still in an intense state of irritation at the service itself, and perhaps because of that told the boys when they emerged from their hiding exactly what I thought of them, declaring it to be treacherous for them to leave me alone with a visitor whose personality was antipathetic to the atmosphere of our house. They took the ground that it was treacherous of me to receive him. Although he will always seem to me a man of spurious culture as he did to them, he appeared to us as a human being, and we first endured, then tolerated, and finally came to sympathize with him. I had played my little tune of tolerance without a mistake, having just enough technique to keep

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the melody flowing. I didn't read *The Christ of the Indian Road* or Descartes that evening, I smoked and played contract, and wondered if religion is a possibility for all natures, or if it just improved some without really making them excellent. I was lonely in my new country of the mind of God although I knew it to be a much better place than the plane of conduct from whence I had climbed.

Who else on our planet would have looked upon this interview as a spiritual triumph? No one. But to me it was confirmation strong of a new and desirable impulse. At that time in the previous summer I would have been so stiff and silent with that parson whose service and ecclesiastical preoccupation had so grievously disappointed me that he could have carried away with him nothing but a fervent desire for my speediest dissolution. I cherished a note from him for two or three days, telling me what a hard time he was having with someone in his parish and of the "kick" he got out of my receptive attitude to his ideas. Although I cannot go to his church and have no response to make to his assertions, we are friendly—an inconceivable condition to my past self. Every friendship helps a little town like the one in which I pass three months of the year.

"Fellowship" is a nice word, and Christ has

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promised increased powers and his presence to those who seek him together, but I felt that no one would want me as a spiritual associate. Believers seemed so much keener on their own brand of church than on the presence of God. I recalled a detestable noun employed by the clergyman—it was churchmanship. It excommunicated me. I prayed for a church that I could love, that I could rejoice in. I find it here and there in all churches now, but I can't see any difference between them except opinions that are like marks of some high tide on the shores of time in a day when steamboats and air planes had no place in air or water.



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## Making a Mood

ONE MUST MAKE A MOOD IN WHICH TO CULTIVATE THE MIND. AN ADVERSE MOOD KILLS THE BEGINNING OF GOD CONSCIOUSNESS, ADVERSE MOODS ARE OFTEN SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS.

MY past centered itself on God, and this stabilization brought rest with it, the sense of acceptance and understanding. Facts that had become a part of my consciousness a long time ago were changed in their primary significance, and the force behind them shifted to inner meanings that lifted me, it is true—but without quite launching me so that I had depth enough to float away. I still stuck when it came to the point of to-day's action, this hour's decision, this present thought's inspiration. Take, for instance and once more, my attitude toward Bach.

I thought of him just as much but in a way that was new. One had always to admit his Christian enthusiasms just as one would the color of his eyes, as an item for his identification, an item of his spiritual passport. But now the significance of those enthusiasms was heart-shaking and much that I had read of him in Schweitzer's biography,

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and that had not seemed to register at the time I read it, returned to me in clear-sounding and unexpected echo. I didn't see how I could join them to my attempt at a technique, although they dovetailed with so many of the thoughts that came to me. Bach was of my past, and I had no idea that Schweitzer was an African missionary.

As I look back on those summer days I see plainly that I was trying to build myself a responsive soul in ignorance of worship. I didn't know what worship was. I didn't know that the surcease of ordinary impression that music sometimes brought me was—to me—the initial step to worship. I didn't know that worship is the full flight toward Christ of the soul that knows its purpose and its privilege, that rejoices in its knowledge, that sums up every resource of courage and initiative to say to the extreme brightness and ultimate beneficence of our uttermost realization of God, "I am gladly aware of your kingdom, your power, and your glory." Worship is more than recognition; it is the extremest impulse of the mind. It is the meeting with the Son of man whom one knows to be the Son of God. It is objective, not subjective, and once one has really worshiped one will always be trying to worship again. But if contempt or criticism is a part of one's mood—no matter how justifiable—the ability to offer Christ the position,

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the direction of vision that enables us to see our full possession of him, isn't there. There is much more to worship than this—there is what Christ gives to us. Every one of us receives from him great gifts when our minds reach out for them, but the attempt to worship, like the attempt to know the Gospels by reading them, doesn't contain success within itself. Worship is a privilege, whether it be offered to impersonal good or to God. To have worshiped in spirit and in truth is to have been strengthened at the source of strength. Impersonal good rewards us only in our own mind process, but in the worship of Christ his actual response illumines life and irradiates the cryptic challenges of pain, and of poverty, and of personal problem.

I didn't know this as I still read first contacts with Christ in the Gospels and found my mind pre-empted by more modern joinings of human will with his standards. All sorts of people grouped themselves around the classic gospel instances until I was mentally surrounded by an international cloud of witnesses. I tried to reconcile the young Bach who had such evident faults with the later mystical toiler—that wasn't hard. But Novalis, Friedrich von Hardenberg, came so often to my mind that I decided the only way to be rid of him was to reread his life. It isn't easy

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in a modern American household to find the hour and the book in the union that is opportunity—the diversity of human activity and destiny oppressed me. I wanted everyone to give over his special interest and join me in my search for intensity of spiritual impression while realizing that I couldn't command such co-operation for a moment. But I got the two boys who were interested in adolescent suicide to read Novalis, upon my representation that the elements of suicide were well within his temperament and his circumstances. That was strategy pure and simple, but those boys had always read books to me in summer and I didn't want to read the last novel with them just then, I wanted to pursue my quest. We began with Carlyle's essay on Novalis, and at once, with the remarkable acquisition of plastic minds, those young men saw that ideas, if they can be fed, triumph over circumstances. It was another instance of man's experience limiting his development—no nourishment, no growth. I read all I could find of Novalis' own writing during the week, and Lichtenberger's life of him—always expecting to hear the pistol shot that is the materialistic interpretation of "It is finished."

That shot never sounded, never even threatened, in spite of the man's innate theatricality, his dramatization of disintegration, his declamation of

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tuberculosis. His circumstances were moribund, his nature responsive to shadows, and his realizations might have been those of the typical German suicide who leaves a philosophic swansong before his self-destructive act, except that among his responses to experience was a developed correspondence with Christ. Novalis knew God to an extraordinary degree. Everyone of suicidal tendency should study him. They should realize that in his betrothed Sophie's death as in his own disease he kept in touch with radiant forces. The boys had never heard of him before but I venture to say they'll never forget him.

I have silly friends as well as wise ones, and among them is the most gifted man I know. He is inconceivably and perversely futile and possesses a facility that only rivals his futility, in literature and in decoration and in the social graces, but he never gets anywhere because he's silly. He talks well, in an agreeable suggestive way that obfuscates every issue, and never seems to take sides, when in reality he has a lot of mid-Victorian predispositions and prejudices that he tries to hide in a vocabulary that is modern and pseudo-scientific. He isn't any more scientific than anyone else except in phrase and figures of speech. We're fond of one another. I have always ridiculed his graceful but relentless egotism, as a thing com-



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plete, unmitigated by any moral sense of values. He came to see me one afternoon, as he often does, and his weird fancy lighted on religion as a timely topic. He said things that hurt me. I didn't resent them but I told him that I had an overwhelming admiration for what Christianity had accomplished and an experiential realization of Christ's presence among men. I shan't forget his reception of my statements. He was visibly casting about for the worst things he could find in the way of rejoinder. His manner became very professorial, as it always does when he doesn't quite know what he's going to say next. But he finally chose the statement that nothing that Christianity was or claimed to be could be illustrated in design.

He said that the church was called universal in appeal by its devotees, whereas it appealed only to ear-minded people; that the eye-minded had no place in it, because there are no designs in the book of life as published by the church. The church has nothing that is truth to be shown in a little pictorial prospectus, he said, so that now when the mind of man no longer tolerates pictures of Saint Sebastian, or the other agonized and contorted Christian visionaries, there is not one truth which can be expressed as a pattern. He then whined for fifteen minutes more about the fatiguing diversity of to-day's activities and left me

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flushed with his own undeniable eloquence. Unfortunately, I agreed with him about the fatigue of endless human diversity of thought and occupation; the diversities of one's own employment torture me. Hardly is one task under way when a more imperative chore raises its ugly head. When he had gone, I invented an illustration in terms of city streets, radiant and radiating, which come from a bright center to a diffusion that traverses space. There are return lines, slender threads of direction that intimate the source and are colored by the many lights of the thoroughfares.

We wrangled over that all summer and a hard-headed banker we know became tremendously interested in it, taking it seriously. He became convinced that eye-minded people get from that design what the ear-minded get from the twenty-third psalm. He uses it now to express a thought of God as the radix of all constructive thinking. He seems to be just as eminent a banker in spite of his devotion to this rather infantile contrivance. I think the banker's indorsement enhanced the value of the device in the mind of our other friend, for he dwelt on it constantly when he was in hospital after a motor smash, and he tells me rather patronizingly that it is the only expression of religion that appeals to him—diverging lines of equal length have a common source. Although

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they don't have to be of equal length, I let it go at that. We always talk together of things we used never to mention, and that little design was the master key that opened doors for us. I wish I knew what goes on inside his mind; some process that makes for courtesy and kindness, I think, and one that excludes malignant gossip—he has ceased to be a scandal monger—too malignant to be amusing. I haven't heard him blast reputations in months, and he frequently goes to the cathedral—he says its progress interests him; I caught him there twice when I visited a friend in Saint Luke's Hospital across the road. I accuse him of being a sly Christian. Lots of people are Christians "en cachette."

One more analogy came from Bach's life to clear up for me my own new thoughts. The local boys and girls had all returned from school for their summer vacation. The neighborhood hummed with them, and fathers and mothers who never went to church in the winter repaired solemnly every Sunday to uphold the religious teaching of the schools. The young people took in the situation perfectly and were much amused by it. One of these parents told me that he had heard nothing spoken for in any of these churchgoings, but he had jotted down in his "alibi book" the things he had heard spoken against—spiritualism, ma-

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terialism, ritualism, evangelism; not all denounced by the same man but with the same fervor. I said nothing to him, but within myself I rejoiced that I had not dreamed my dream of church very lately. That evening a musician came unexpectedly for dinner. He had with him the book of Bach's chorales in an edition that I had never seen before, and after he had played some of them to me we began to speak of the forms Bach used as a medium of his musical ideas. He had held to old forms, reviving them with the ardor of his contrapuntal inspiration, while Händel and Haydn had spent their forces on the adoption of new forms that seem mannerisms in the test of time and have never developed beyond these composers' individual uses. That analogy somehow persuaded me not to rush out after new things; it formulated my hopes of finding a church into which I might one day put the love and reverence I increasingly felt. Chorales became churches to me and promises of shelters for the unexplained impulses to seek others who were drawn toward Christ. Bach might so easily have snatched at the new things from Italy and have lost to the world one of the noblest things that Luther pointed out to it—the "artsinging" of the German churches of the Reformation.

In these days I was busy from morning till night. I had no time to study anything but time-tables

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and motor routes and how a big household can be contained in a small house. The telephone sounded all the time; people left things behind them; one had promised to do things at identical hours and great distances; my boy and his friends wanted to be left alone—the usual summer hubbub had begun with a vengeance. The day before I went away myself I had the morning alone. The relief of it was a pleasure; not because I wanted to be rid of guests—they were charming guests—but because I wanted to increase my technique. The Matthew “Passion” was in the hands of a boy who wanted to play it at sight. I told him I thought he better let one who knew it do it for him at first and I carried the book with me to the garden. Opening it I read the first chorus, standing with the townspeople where Bach has placed us, watching Christ go through the crowds to his death. The daughters of Zion wept for him their mounting melody and the uncomprehending and cruel punctuated it with their questioning cries of where and when and why. When I came to the wistful worship of, “Oh Lamb of God, most holy,” I worshiped too. The tenderness of the recognition of those who saw him as God and Redeemer swept away every resistance to him that life had made for me or that my own lack of vision had made for myself. A new mood was made for me,



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in which I could look up at the height upon which Christ reviews the ages without a thought of anyone but him. I had searched my own consciousness for his presence as one searches spring skies for the first bird that means summer, but in this time of realization I could look out far beyond the limits of myself, to see him drawing us all after him to our share in service for mankind. I walked the world with him and I never lost all of the mood in which that glory came. My shining hour had returned a hundredfold. I turned to the aria "Bleed and burn, thou loving heart," with tears on my cheeks—a manifestation I have always deprecated.

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## Citizen Fixit

THIS is the impossible chapter to make clear; the one that won't get itself written because, perhaps, it is the dividing line between the consecutive effort to install permanently the ideals of Christ in my consciousness as I was beginning to understand them, and a first attempt to impose my new consciousness on other people's ideals. It is the early and forward thrust of the missionary instinct whose manifestation demands all of human tact and as much as prayer and absolute honesty may obtain of divine love, if one is not to see the priceless pearl, the brightest jewel of the minds of sages, the mainspring of the will power of the saints, rejected only because it is badly presented.

It seemed to me in the days that followed that one of the most difficult and most worth-doing of life's tasks is that of trying not to dilute Christ with one's own opinions, one's own church or non-church sympathies as one tries to gain a foothold for him in other minds. This came to me with the force of discovery; I didn't know that it was a commonplace of the modern evangelical mind. I tried for the whole of the following fortnight not to distort him but to present him to the man who

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so needed him without any ceremonial robe or predilection for any special characteristic or ethics in his followers. The special service, the resulting character development was to be his, not mine. I went again and again to my memory of his amazing interview with the woman of Samaria—I had not yet learned to travel with the Testament—and to the Sermon on the Mount, wondering to what degree his teachings should be applied. To-day it is only a question of degree, for none of our constructive contemporaries worry as Victorian thinkers worried—some of them—as to the desirability of Christ's spirit. Perhaps four years of war have taught us something after all. We all accept the substance of Christ's teaching as never before, but we differ violently as to what degree to apply it. So much seemed to me a question of the human will when it came to the extent of light by which to read life's pages. There was also the limitation of capacity, the old truth that I am eternally knocking up against, the neurologist's slogan—that human development is limited by human experience and that a pint pot cannot contain the quart's quantity. Correspondence with the mind of Christ is the highest human experience, but it isn't necessary to line up at once with the people who have developed this or that phrase of his until it has become a philosophy and a policy and a wall

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to be scaled by those of other philosophies and policies. A sympathy that suggests such allegiance is often an immature one. I tried to think that all out, for I had talked with a charming Roman Catholic priest at a dinner party, who had told me quite a lot about the dangers and impertinences of those who presume to lead their friends to any knowledge of God save by the great highway of the church. I had listened to all he had to say about individual application of what one read in the Testament and I was—stupidly—a good deal shocked by him. I really think it most stupid to be shocked, but since his point of view was part of my experience I had to act on or react to it.

After my unexpected Hour of Worship in the Garden, I got into the car to drive a hundred and ten miles as the first stage of my journey, delighted that I was to be by myself until dinner time. I could think or fancy or remember uninterrupted until it was time to laugh and to live with two people I love to be with. They are very much in the world, shrewd but kind, sanguine but sane, always defeated at some specific point and always hopeful of the main issue. They have many reserves and no pretensions. I thought I might define worship with their aid; they were inarticulate but enthusiastic Christians. Their gift was not public speech but private exposition. They have

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never talked to me about religion but they have to psychologists, who have quoted them. I looked forward to them as never before. And in that hour I was sure that nothing that is Christ's can exist in its full power without our response; the design is expressed symmetrically in our response, in our responsive developments. From that one cell on the shore beginning the physical climb toward this genus homo, with its prophetic dreams and ideas that drive it to laboratories for verification, its amplifications of melodic patterns, its intensification of love and of knowledge, it is our responsive development that puts us on the level of the mind of minds—Christ's level. If we are a conscious response, we are very happy; if we are an unconscious response, we are useful according to capacity but sometimes bitterly unhappy, or so it seems to me.

On this morning of departure I seemed beautifully far from the push and press of particular instances. I was to be alone with abstract impressions, at least so I hoped.

I knew my part in the coming show well enough to forget about it until rehearsal, so I hadn't a thought of the theatrical enterprise to which I was committed until, as I passed the railway station, a vaguely familiar—in appearance—youngish man waved madly at me from its platform. "Oh, stop



for a moment; see what he wants—we must, I suppose,” I said to my man. I recognized the waving figure as an amateur actor who did a minor, non-singing part in the show. He approached full of apologies for having spent a night in the town without looking us up. I almost said aloud, “I’m so glad you didn’t.” One’s involuntary response to hail fellow isn’t always well met—not in the early stages of Christian practice! He asked me rather wistfully how long it would take to drive up, and I said I would ask him to see for himself except that I was stopping overnight with a friend. He supposed there was an inn near my friend’s house. The man wasn’t so impertinent as he was anxious to escape the heat of the train and keep in the good air. I groaned but told him to come with me. He was so happy to be free of junctions and dining cars that he paid no heed to my grudging assent and took his place beside me with satisfaction. He was cool in mind, rather intelligent, hard, and visibly fond of his ease. I noticed that he had given quite a lot of thought to his clothes—more so than the well-dressed modern—man or woman—cares to betray. He had spent the night with an old college friend who was the local attorney. He apologized for knowing him so well when he found that I—a summer person—had never met him. His snobbery was of the most

minute and poignant variety. At one point in his talk he asked me if I didn't think religious arguments in very bad taste. I told him I had never heard one.

"I asked you that," he answered, "because they were having one after rehearsal one evening and I wondered what you were thinking about it."

I asked him if that venomous chatter were supposedly religious and he said it was. "I never listen to that sort of thing," I told him. "It's not the atmosphere that religion breathes; it's not kind, and one person is only trying to show that the other is wrong—not that he is right."

"I think," he said, "that you *have* listened to religious arguments."

We laughed.

"I go to church once or twice a year," I told him, "and I always listen to the sermon. It isn't always a good sermon, for I generally go to the Episcopal Church, and Episcopal clergy are not very interesting preachers as a class, I've heard."

He told me that he was brought up as a Presbyterian and missed going to church fearfully. "I'm an atheist," he said, simply.

"If you're sincerely an atheist, I can learn a lot from you—you must know a lot about God." I looked at him with a little interest.

"As a matter of fact, I don't," he returned, very

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sheepishly; "if I thought of God, I should be afraid of him, so I never think of him."

"The realization of an understanding above human reason precludes fear," I told him. I also said that he was an insincere atheist.

"I read all the non-God articles in the *Atlantic Monthly*," he said. "I want awfully to get rid of my latent religious tendency. My active participation in church and that kind of thing is done with."

I was most embarrassed. The man's lack of reticence amazed me. He evidently thought he had made a mistake, for he had the grace to say he didn't know why he told me all this. I didn't either. I wanted to be polite and I felt I could speak of the *Atlantic Monthly*. I have a friend who reads it aloud to me every month with jeers and ribald comment. I like it rather. There was an article, I recalled, about its having been easier to believe in the all-wisdom of Christ if he had only called after some healed and happy leper—or anyone else—than that C. Columbus would discover a new continent in 1492. The writer had rather mixed information and wisdom, it seemed to me at that moment, and was longing for a sign. I wasn't quite sure of that view of a familiar, sophomoric doubt—and I knew lots of them—as I began to speak of this article by an erotic novelist. I met with a very languid response.

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I felt that I had promised him transportation, not entertainment, and stopped talking. He thereupon reverted to his personal strain. He seemed so glad to speak of himself that I turned and looked him in the face for the first time. His expression was one of worry and the texture of his hair and skin was still young although his outlines sagged. I didn't listen to him for a while—I was engrossed in my own dissatisfaction at his presence. He recaptured my attention by using a queer expression. "I," he said, "can make only four thousand dollars a year, but I have a brother who makes money every time he turns over in bed."

"Now comes the stock market," I thought. I like the market, but I hear enough of it.

To divert him I stopped at the house of a woman I know rather well, a professional writer, rather precious, and what the boys call "snooty." Her mother was ill and I sent him in to inquire for her. The woman came to the door herself and made us stop while she gave us a lot of sandwiches and a thermos bottle full of tea, directing our chauffeur to a beach we ought to make at five o'clock, whence we could see the sunset. My passenger got what is known as a "kick" out of this very simple meeting.

"It was lucky," I observed, "that we stopped."

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I had completely forgotten her promise about the tea and the sandwiches and the beach.

He looked at me with the most reproachful astonishment. "If anyone did a thing like that for me, I should never forget it," he said. His lip shook and his eyes were tearful.

I began to like him. "You think of it as a kindness and I think of it as a mere civility," I answered. "You are right and I am wrong."

He was more at his ease after that but I saw that his happiness in the moment was immense; this simple drive was an event, but beneath his momentary satisfaction was sorrow, deep and evident. I was suddenly willing that he should talk about himself. He was amazed at the kindness of my friend in telephoning the hotel to keep a room for him. He seemed so easily surprised at decent manners. I almost asked him if he were a widower's child—for he seemed a stranger to the elaborate kindness of women in our common country and I accounted for it on a basis of his being motherless.

He knew a lot about the people of whom we had spoken in our brief visit. I was amazed by him. Those who went to Nassau in the winter, whose sons played polo, whose daughters went to college or, in one instance, eloped—had all been tabulated in his memory from the public prints. I asked



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him if he were a detective, and he told me with the dull flush my direct method seemed to elicit, that he was a bank employee and very lonely. "It is a kind of a dream of men like me," he said, "when they have gotten on a little, to hope that they will be taken in by the men who are so at home with one another downtown, the fellows who went to Groton and Saint Marks and Saint Pauls—so I guess we all read about their families, only most of us lie about it afterward."

I was touched that he should feel shut out. I wanted to make him feel that there was a basis of manhood upon which all worth-while men stood. I hid the fact that my own son had gone to one of these schools and told him that I was glad he liked the friendliness and vagrancy of the way we were traveling. I realized that the best of his life was vicarious, that he was looking over the fence at a game he couldn't play. I felt he didn't know the rules. I wasn't idealizing him, I was sympathizing with him. I questioned him about his school, his people, his state. I knew nothing of any of them, but he told me a good deal, and I felt he was looking backward through a vista of hall bedrooms and cramping deprivations, from which his dressiness and society news erudition were the natural wistful outcome. I had the curious impression that he was always coming to something that he wanted

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dreadfully to get said and that he was always resisting the impulse. I saw the ensuing relief and the resumption of his struggle. I knew what a whirlpool was drawing him and that he had probably had a row with his employer to look back on or forward to, or that he was in love. Those two things overspread the consciousness of man as no other human things can.

I didn't want to barge in on his secrets; I wanted him to be happy. I had ceased to be indifferent. He said something that showed he had the superstitious veneration for scientists—spurious and actual—that so many half-baked magazine readers have. I drew a long breath and told myself that there was a position I could attack without prying and with honor.

“Do you know a lot about scientists—as you do about other people?” I asked, rather ferociously, I am afraid.

He said that he always read in the newspapers all that they said about God.

I asked him if he thought the effectively scientific men talked for the newspapers about God.

He admitted he didn't know and asked me if I thought they did. I thought they didn't. “But,” I added, “the smug absolutism of the pseudo-scientific attitude is a pain to the right-minded scientist. It rivals the ingrowing pride and the silly point of

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view of churchmen seventy years ago." He scented a scandal and his newspaper-fed intelligence was hungry for it. I told him that the churchmen of the early Victorian era saw that man's knowledge of man was bound to develop but that they dared to deny that his knowledge—or his love—of Christ would do the same thing.

"Don't speak against the church," he cried out. "I can't go there as I did, but it is a beautiful and holy association. I was better off when I was hand in glove with it."

I felt stricken. If he had been a little better bred, with manners a little more liberal, I would have taken his hand and begged his pardon, but I guessed that he would think that even a woman of my age was a flirtatious or undignified being if I did anything so natural. I told him that I was interested in his impression of church and all the more so since he cared what science thought about God. The church meant so much to him—of authority. I had never realized that it stood for authority in anyone's mind to-day any more than it would have in the minds of those two odious but unacquainted contemporaries Nero and Boadicea. I had steered him to safe ground and he developed his views about church at length and with enjoyment. I asked him if he knew others who felt that way, and he said he did—thousands. I said I

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knew perhaps twenty. He then said that I probably deterred people from speaking to me about church.

"I should know in a minute," he said, "that I mustn't talk to you about it. If you hadn't asked me to, I wouldn't have dared. There's something about you that is inimical to all that sort of thing."

I said that was bad news, and he was overcome with confusion. I felt that I was taking my life in my hands; it was a real effort to me to speak the truth.

I said as quietly as I could, "In spite of living very close to scientists and hearing them from time to time announce their conclusions, I am, as a matter of fact, so obsessed with the philosophy and so persuaded of the presence and power of Christ in the world of to-day, that I fear to express myself now lest I shall seem too vehement." I felt immensely better after I had said that.

He was so surprised he didn't speak. After a moment he said that he had no idea that I was the least interested in "that sort of thing." "Why should I not be?" I asked. "Lots of people are."

He seemed to think that the fact that I had smoked ever since we left the station precluded religious interests. I was angry with him. I am unaccustomed to criticism from anyone except occasionally an irate brother or a very old friend

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who thinks I am not firm enough with people whose origin and manners she does not approve. We neither of us spoke for five minutes—from a bridge to the ferry road, which is exactly five minutes. His own engrossing thought kept him silent and I was determined not to speak until I could do so without showing how vexed I was. I managed to say at last that it might be well to smoke less, but that I thought it absurd to connect smoking with religion. "A religion that has a smoke clause in it," I remember saying, "isn't a very deep or satisfying thing."

"Smoking is not a good thing," he insisted stubbornly.

I observed that there were many worse, and he said, "You bet there are," in a most despairing voice. I saw he was facing his dominant topic again.

We arrived at the beach and sat silent while we drank our tea. We were a thin slice of humanity between the impersonal sky and the illimitable sea. I was grateful for his silence and began to practice a technical exercise in the peace of that beach.

When I have been vexed I use the same formula that I use when I have slept: "He restoreth my soul, he re-enforces my mind, he renews his spirit within me, I shall be resurrected in him" is what



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I think. At night when I'm in bed I dwell on this as a promise, when I wake up I regard it as a foretaste of resurrection, and when I have been adversely disturbed I accept it as my privilege. I think about Christ in any aspect that presents itself so long as it is not controversial—I don't feel the urge of controversy then—and my powers of kindness return to me; I escape the adverse emotion in that mind process. I had found my "soul restored" at the moment before my passenger said, "I am ashamed of speaking of your smoking when I am thinking of doing something that may be a big mistake." I took out my cigarette case and smoked.

Then I thought that this poor soul would in all probability never see me again after the show was given, and that as it isn't a temptation of mine to tell what has been told to me, I was probably just the person for him to tell his woes to. But my dislike of being on familiar terms with a man who wasn't either of my world or conveniently and demonstrably outside it, kept me constantly blocking his impulse to tell me some long yarn about losing a job or a girl.

"You will never see me again after our show is put across," I said quite kindly, "so wouldn't you like to talk to me about this thing that troubles you?"

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He didn't like that. He said he would, of course, come and see me and often ring my telephone to find out how I fared. I didn't like that too much, but I let it take care of itself. Then he said that if he were to tell me what he contemplated doing, I might not care to receive him at all. "Yesterday I was so elated at the prospect of what I was planning," he said, "but all to-day I have been disliking it more and more until now I hate it."

I asked him what was wrong with it from the impersonal standpoint. He told me it was a problem without any impersonal aspect whatever. I responded that it must be a remarkable problem. He then said that it was a problem that had its root in the injustice of human destiny—that one man was given all the cards and the other never held anything higher than a ten. I quoted Wolfville: "Life isn't holding the cards, it's playing a poor hand well." He wouldn't concede that; he thought it was mock-noble bunk. Then he steadied and told me he had been in love a long time with a young woman who was an instructor of mechanical drawing in a woman's college. "She hasn't even a cultural subject," he moaned, "and she can't stop her hand-to-hand struggle with the wolf long enough to acquire one. We have no one behind us financially and I am not at all sure

that she could move with ease in the circle toward which I am progressing, but she is very broad-minded and up-to-date, and I have spoken frankly with her. We are going abroad together so soon as the show is over, to live together—frankly—out of sight of our friends; and if we don't want to continue in that relation, we can part and no bones broken."

I looked at him to see if he seemed as mad as he sounded; then I said: "Look at your own paradox. Designedly living out of sight of your friends isn't living frankly. If you intend doing that sort of thing, you ought not to speak of it to anyone."

"That's what's so awful about to-day," he burst out. "You and your friends are too terribly open; you say right out what you think and feel and do. But I shall have this infernal thing as a secret. I shan't want to boast of it as if I were a drummer in the smoking compartment of a Pullman"—I always look askance at drummers now—I may forget it in time.

"It will resolve itself into karma," I suggested.

Then he said a thing I liked; he said that karma always seemed to him like the punitive chicken one tied round the neck of a marauding dog to teach him not to kill other chickens. I told him that there were quicker ways than karma of acquiring that sort of useful knowledge and that his

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choice of a figure of speech based on chickens was, perhaps, appropriate. He denied that. He said the young woman he meant to go abroad with was no chicken. "I have told you all about myself," he added; "tell me something about yourself."

"The thing I'll tell you first," I answered, "is that I'm interested in you and that I think you are living on too low a level to see the road you ought to travel to get anywhere in the land of success—you can't attain even worldly success without some aspiration."

He looked at me for some time, visibly suffering; then he begged me to give him some specific advice. I told him I couldn't do that, but that the next day I would try to help him to overlook his problem from higher ground that he might solve it from a new viewpoint.

"Do you think you love her?" I asked.

He said, "I do love her," with a ponderous dignity that wasn't real or convincing.

I was a little rude then, for I said "Rats," which was involuntary and excusable in the face of the facts as stated.

He seemed wounded, so I talked about how tiresome the telephone was going to be for me during rehearsals and when I was trying to sleep. "I've been brought up near here and I've a lot of pals nearby. The telephone is going to be a bother."

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He said he would answer it—it would give him something to do. He really wanted to come in contact with more and better people. He left me at my destination and passed on to his, but he stuck in my mind, much as I wanted to forget him—his sordid loneliness and the corrosion of the drab recital he had called his love story gripped my memory. I realized that the poor soul was a bad man, that he was about to unravel the social fabric and start some woman on a career she couldn't—ten to one—make good at, the career of predatory association with business men. That is a career with its distinct goals and its definite dangers and rewards, and there are women who deliberately choose it. They hate it but they love luxury, crave it until they demand it. This woman might be different. I wondered just what kind of an idiot she was. Her man looked down on me a little in one way—I smoked like a fiend and I wasn't churchy. He seemed at the moment a proof that church doesn't mean much, for he had been brought up in it and was a bounder. All that evening the surface of my mind was occupied with the kind of thought and jest and speculation that I like, but below it was the intruding memory of my new friend and his nasty unnecessary perplexities. I went up to bed still thinking of him and wishing that he could attain to some



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sense of romance, some possession of the sweetness and exaltation of what one calls a desperate love affair. And I also felt a little guilty. I knew what my husband or my brothers would have called me for listening to a man like that.

I sat at the window possessed by my sordid friend's dilemma. I wanted to help him and for that reason I couldn't let him go. When I realized that, I laughed at myself. I had seen that kind of thing so much in the mothers of my son's school friends, who spent blameless lives making things worse and weeping and sentimentalizing over peccadillos that were only symptoms of sins to be, and should have been met with explanations and shouts of laughter. My friend was wicked and wasn't having a good time out of it at that. I meant to fulfill my threat of lifting him to a higher level whence he might review his plans but I didn't know how. I had enough sense to be sure that specific advice would be mistaken—that his acts must be self-determined and that I must dis-infect and raise his point of view—I had Christ with which to do it. I thought of missionaries, and wondered how they got started and I thought of the modern neurologist who is also a missionary—often without the inspiration of church fellowship—and wondered how he got started. I knew more of the failures of these good people than of

their successes. I was depressed. I was afraid of failing, of making things worse, of seeming to condone, of being too puritanical and mandatory—I was afraid of making all the mistakes that can be made. I was perfectly aware that to help a man effectively one must have a good deal more than the mere desire to help him. I had a “quitter’s” impulse after that reflection. I thought of feeling rather ill and sending the motor on with my passenger and then letting it come back a day later for me. I wanted terribly to help him, so that didn’t work. I went out on the sleeping porch to get into my bed. It was a wide, bright night. Stars pulsed and a moon shone very low at the night sky’s mysterious meeting with the world. It was a symbol for the fanciful—a little light between earth and heaven. I wished I had brought a Testament with me or the *Hymn a la nuit* of Novalis I had gotten hold of in a French translation. I was thrown back on myself for correspondence with Christ’s mind and I felt it was easier to read than to remember. I wished very much that I had something at hand to counsel me.

I shall always enjoy that night because I shall never be able to forget it, its beauty and its many thoughts. None of them fitted the questions that stirred in my mind. I didn’t know how or what to pray, but I knew of Christ’s power and I felt

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sure that if I were still and attentive, always remembering that my passenger's point of view and Christ's ethic were to meet without my visible intervention, even if by my introduction, something would come out of it that would change him, heal him, make him amenable to romance and the open way of bringing a woman home and giving her a place in the world. I couldn't do my exercises at first, thinking thoughts about sleep and trying to have my last idea that of the promise of a restoration of the mind's action, the mental process, the resurrection. I knew that the time to practice is when one doesn't want to, provided one's distaste isn't the result of too much practicing. I began by thinking of the remoteness that sleep brings to us, the restful remoteness. When I got to the point where I could say, "He restoreth my soul," I wanted him to restore my passenger's.

"I am a new creature in that I am Citizen Fixit," I told myself, "I am a busybody. I care awfully about that—to me—no longer obscure and common person—my passenger. I am minding someone else's business. I am, alas, the cheapest of all meddlers, a Citizen Fixit who is interested in other people's love stories."

The exaltation of humility was a fact for me, for I felt that I was permitted to be just those

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things—in Christ's name. But I wanted to have something definite to do. I do to-day. There is a spiritual ambition, perhaps. "No matter if you do fall down on your first assignment," I told myself, "there is more than one rôle in this new play." Then I felt overlooked, unchosen. Since our tea-party on the beach a prayer had been knocking at my heart. It wasn't a dignified prayer, and I involuntarily outlawed it as I did the semi-occasional curses with which I had adorned my private conversation hitherto. But as I thought of the astonishing number of persons in the cast of my life's drama my petition took to itself wings. "Give me a speaking part," I prayed. If one follows the instruction of Doctor Jones and is simple, one immediately becomes fantastic. I was amused. I had caught that phrase—speaking part—from the Chorus upon which I had often looked as the stupidest and vulgarest of theatrical activities, and it now embodied the dearest item of my desire to serve. "Oh, well, I can't help the phrase," I said, "the thought must count. Give me a speaking part and I will get it over." By speaking part I meant a rôle that counts, that registers, something beyond the dumbshow of the chorus.

### WHAT MY PASSENGER CALLED LOVE

My hosts went to bed earlier than my custom

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was, and for that reason I woke the next morning earlier than my usual time. No one was stirring when I looked over the edge of the sleeping-porch railing. The garden spread out before me to the breakers of the rock-rimmed sea; the pageant of Maine's summer was at its height. Lilies raised white heads against the sky's enameled blue; and yellow roses and the Atlantic Ocean breathed in one another's faces. Two great hemlocks stood whispering in the path of a south wind—their extreme beauty might have been an item of a dream of Novalis. It was the æsthetic crisis in the season's loveliness. I put on a bathing suit and ran down the stairway from the sleeping porch to the swimming pool. I felt as if I were spoiling a beautiful arrangement when I dove into the still, salty water, reflecting the glory about it without the responsibility of choice and with a faithful exactitude. When I came out I lay in the sun to dry and get warm, and as I stretched out a hand over the stone I lay on face downward, I felt the sharp edge of a book. Drawing it to me I read its title—*La Samaritaine*. It was Rostand's play and it brought to my memory all the happy days in Paris when I had seen it there.

I felt the ghost of the irresponsibility, the fidelity to sensuous beauty but to nothing else, of those young and happy times of my honeymoon and I



rejoiced that no estrangement, no vulgarity, had put its blemish on the early days of our love and our playhours. I remembered Bernhardt's voice—old—yet of all speaking voices the loveliest; and, the book closed in my hand, I began to say aloud into the silence of that crystalline morning the words of Rostand's noble amplification of Christ's meeting with la Samaritaine. I was thinking of my husband and of Sarah Bernhardt—who had lent the glory of her voice to Rostand's lines—and I wondered what had taken the sting out of such recollection. I wondered how I dare remember—I who had lost so much. Tears for my own tragedies had been washed from my eyes with those I had since shed in joy, and something that made me think of what Bach expected in heaven had happened here on earth. I remember that he wrote "*Da wischt mir die thränen der Heiland selbst ab.*" ("There the Saviour himself will wipe away my tears.")

But even then I felt a gratifying superiority that my experience had been better than the tepid, tawdry, hesitant version of human passion my passenger had put before me with such pain. I opened the play at the first page and read of the approach of the poor vulgar creature with a song as vulgar as she was, on her lips. I remembered that the play begins with her apology for that song. I put

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the book down to reflect that my passenger was worse than that woman—at least he was less interesting—because he was so disgustingly timid.

I spoke aloud Christ's answer to her apology, I didn't need the book for that—"Je suis toujours un peu dans tous les mots d'amour." ("I am always a little in all words of love.")

If that were so, I was rebuked. If he were—never so faintly—in the words of avowal on the tongue of my young man who was trying to economize on holy matrimony, I had but to develop him. "I am so different—made so by my thoughts of Christ—that I believe this man could be different too," I said. I prayed that I might bring my friend to a sense of Christ's nearness and that I might then vanish and have all the specific plans as between them. My maid had waked early too and brought me my coffee from the kitchen. Beside a big roll was my Testament. "I thought you might want it," she said. I told her I might never want it more. I thanked her.

I couldn't find anything about a man like my passenger. I read through the Epistles until it was time to dress. I felt that the work might have been done within his strange heart overnight. I felt that all things were possible, and that in itself is the foretaste of Christ's power. My mood changed. I believed a little in my traveling com-

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panion even as I believed in the force to which I prayed. I wanted a sign—the sign of this mind's redemption, its changed direction. The counselor who dwells within, the mysterious and mandatory thing we call conscience after the fact and conviction before it, told me not to plan. My hosts were waiting to say good-by below stairs and the passenger with his social complex had come up here to join me and meet them upon a pretext of time-saving. I saw all the wheels go round in his brain. I wasn't annoyed, I was amused. I thought I might have more weight with him if I didn't smoke. It was torture not to.

I decided not to talk about anything but Christ until I had developed some phase of him in which he stood revealed. "Then," I thought, "this man will have an advantage that I haven't. He will go to his church which he has learned to use and he will have good people to counsel him and perhaps love him; he is of the household of faith—or does that just apply to clergymen? Meanwhile I have no one to teach me anything, and a lot of will to serve is escaping every moment because there is no one to tell me how to concentrate it. People should not be converted until there are schools for subsequent training." I was all for the Jesuits momentarily because they have schools. I made myself stop envying the celestial future of

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the man at my side because he was exactly as he was the night before except that his mouth was a little more stubborn. "How," I thought, "shall I begin this chapter?"—with a question, I decided. What question? A very queer query tumbled into my mind.

"What part of your pursuit of this friend of yours would you consider most pleasing to Christ were you still of his company?" I asked boldly. I was aghast after the words had left my lips.

He said that was a queer question. "Isn't it?" I replied, complacently. But within I was quaking, I was afraid he would hear me breathe.

He said he thought that the most beautiful scene between them would be the most pleasing to Christ, and that the most beautiful scene was what had almost persuaded him to plunge in and marry. "You know," he said, "my girl is very fascinating to people of the sort from which I'm emerging."

I tried not to hate him for that, but I could have struck him. I never like anyone but myself to be a snob.

"Think of that scene," I said, "and in the face of its beauty think what it would mean to you to have a sense of Christ's sympathy in the most remorseless of human intimacies—the one where all pretences fail and false colors fade. The human relation where tact and truth have to be fifty-fifty

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and where reproaches and rebukes make wounds that never heal—the relation between lovers.”

He said he wasn't contemplating the indissoluble bond.

“But you were tempted by just that contemplation at the most beautiful scene,” I suggested. He said he was.

I had nothing to say after that. I wanted to quote something wonderful out of my Testament or Doctor Jones' book or Sir Thomas Browne or Descartes or Goethe—I couldn't remember a thing but the march and rhythm of the sentence Sir Thomas Browne made when he was at Hastings—“Think that this soil has here withstood the drums and tramlings of three conquests.”

The mandatory me whispered within, “Don't try to be pious with borrowed phrases, bring your own idiom to this emergency; it's the only one you're sure of.” I thought I must establish a mind process for this man that might lead him up. “Now,” I went on, a little too much like the prestidigitateur, I don't doubt, “without a word to me, of course, reconstruct your beautiful scene. I think I shall pray for you. I believe in prayer.” His eyes were kind and his mouth was smiling when I looked at him again. He liked to think of that scene of his.

“When a voice is trained by a good master,” I told him, “he takes its best note, and makes the



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notes on either side like it; and then he takes the tones on either side of the perfected three and works up and down the scale until his pupil runs a reformed gamut, that he would be willing to put his name to, were it a picture." I remember when Lombardi said to me, "That is your voice but my scale. No conceit, please, it is my scale." I was enormously entertained then but I was thankful for his phrase now—it was a point of departure. I wanted my passenger to take his best love scene and build to it from the future and the past.

"What was the basis of your lovely scene?" I asked next.

"I think it was Jane's own charm, or perhaps it was her childish confidence that all we had to do to be married was to love each other." "I and my parents were very much of the world—yet we believed that," I told him, "and," I added, "you mustn't tell me your young woman's name. Your relation with her doesn't warrant it. When women are in the illicit category it's safer to keep them rigorously anonymous."

He rebelled. "One moment you are so offhand and the next you are so particular," he complained.

"I am fastidious and come of a class that has formulated a code—of details, perhaps—but the big facts of life can be itemized and separated into essentials. Those essentials, analyzed after the big

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facts have supervened, turn out to be the bases of the details our fastidiousness demanded."

"That is a funny sermon," he said, and I replied that it was only a text.

"Get back now," I urged him, "to the logical sequence to your lovely scene." He felt that the logical sequence would have begun with writing to the girl's brother, who was a clergyman in a Western town, and that they then would have been married very quietly and would have begun a career of renunciation by foregoing an apartment in New York as too expensive.

That was the social and economic sequence only, but I didn't debate that with him. I merely asked him what his idea of love was. It had to do with a house and friends and clubs and a church which one supported visibly and to the approval of the community.

"One has to be sensible about love, no matter how hard it is," he declared. I longed to tell him he was an ass, but I felt that he would be estranged by any rough frankness. He practiced a spurious elegance that was new to me and very tiresome.

### BEING SIMPLE

My brother met us as we were nearing our destination. I shifted to his car and sent my passenger and the luggage on together in mine.

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I have a curious relation with this brother—we are just as we were when we lived together in the nursery, united against the mysteries and tyranny of an adult and confusing world. His profession may take him from me for an interim but he returns athirst for the impersonal, cultural thing, eager for the music or the theatrical crisis which has engulfed me and of which I would not feel tempted to speak to others. Although he is tense and his most visible characteristic is courage, his reverie—in psychological phrase—is “impersonal but vivid” and very consecutive. Perhaps my reverie is habitually impersonal, and on that ground one may explain the intensity of our intimacy. We forget to tell each other the news in the accepted sense of the word; I may come home from a year abroad and as we drive up from the steamer discuss with him what it is that makes Gertrude Kappel’s voice an excitement or Ernest Bloch, the—to us—most worth-while of American modern composers.

It is impossible to explain our twinnishness—a state his wife has never tried to impair or contract—but if we hear music together, we draw together and sit clasping one another’s hands as we used to when our governess played us the Brahms “Intermezzi” years and years ago in our mother’s freakishly Victorian drawing room.

I always think of him with a light of morning in his eyes, as I think of Simplon's Peak in the day's early sunshine. We sometimes fight and as soon regret it, only to draw together and sit hand in hand, too utterly relieved to be together to recall what the fight was about. But our talk will be about what is happening to the English language or why a violinist thinks he speaks to the hearts of his hearers by "smearing." This sounds cold but, in fact, it is very comfortable, and it does not make me forget that I have held his face against my breast when his children died and watched the tears flood out from his closed eyes. His voice has been the thing that I could remember when horror and sadness came to me. It wasn't a very literary message that he got over to me, but it did get over. I have often heard its echo: "Buck up, old Girl; it's hard to believe, but these hours will pass."

Many of one's good friends are poor companions, but he is a companionable friend.

"Where did you pick that fellow up?" he demanded. I told him.

"There must be something in him if you drove him up."

"Why?"

"You never stay introduced to people who bore you unless they are attached to some picturesque dilemma—you're a woman."

"Investigate him and tell me what you find," I said.

He at once told me about the treatment of some pine trees in full sunlight by a painter he knows, and as he tried to make me understand I was so grateful for him after my long session with my chance companion that I began to sing and we went along singing two parts of the madrigal, "Oh, Silver Swan." After that we had a long talk about immortality—he has the modern perception of its probability—and he rather "booed" me for not thinking about it sometimes. "I accept it," I said.

"Since when?" he flung at me mockingly as we drew up among the waiting troupe at our journey's end. The rehearsal was beginning, the conductor was in his place, the orchestra was ready, the sailors from one of the yachts were working at the curtain. A few miles had changed our lives. As my entrance neared and the *repetiteur* came toward me with his open book I felt for a moment as if I were saying a long good-by to the beauty and vigor, the intention and re-enforcement, of my new life. I remembered Doctor Jones' simplicity, and it seemed a permission in a sense, for I had no time for anything elaborated. I left the channel of my correspondence to the guardianship of Christ—which seems too fantastic to be any part of reverence—and when, at the end of the clowning and



the sentimental singing and the scenes of vituperation that were mine to carry through as a virago, I started through the garden to my rooms to change for dinner, the resumption of the peace and purpose within me was as definite as the coat my brother put around my shoulders. The conductor stopped me to say I had never been so good in my part. He was no more to me than a thought in someone else's mind; the central shining fact of all life was Christ. I saw my passenger in the relentless hands of his coach and waved to him. I ran up the stairs thinking to tackle a new first contact with Christ in the gospel—I am afraid that was just the slangy way in which I put it to myself. I began to wonder what place culture could have in evangelism. I had read rapidly that morning the first chapter of First Corinthians and it had made me a little distrustful of my kind of person. I regarded reading the Epistles as cheating, as I hadn't finished the Gospels, and the only things my father ever scolded me for were inconsecutive reading and not getting more thrills out of Jefferson. I don't mean that I hadn't read the actual words of the Gospels many times, but I hadn't taken them in my technical quest from end to end. I had but scratched them in that application, nor shall I ever finish their application or suggestiveness.

We were dining at half-past eight and it was

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only seven o'clock, so I might sit on and watch the wisps of fog drift about the harbor and wonder if culture meant much more than an intellectual anodyne if it were not used as a basis of more and better human contacts. Even in the muddle of sensuality of Elizabethan days or the orgiastic times in Florence, the arts led men to each other in a high and splendid fashion, just as they are doing to-day. They were as beautiful as ever, but I felt I should never be able to fit them into the puzzle of man's consciousness. I know now that beauty is the face of God, and that when Loyola stayed a long time in Venice without going to Titian's studio, or when Howard, the prison reformer, went on an errand of mercy (was it Crimean prisoners?) to Greece and stayed awhile in Athens without looking at the Acropolis, they were refusing brotherhood to great souls. But I wanted to be as concentrated, as absorbed in Christ and his philosophy as are the men who really serve God as a skilled calling. I wondered how they listen to our orchestras, and look at our pictures, or whether they still think of them as something detached from God's service unless a clergyman evince a musical or painter's facility.

I hadn't dared to think about that kind of thing before, lest my religion should die down under my sense of the neglect of loveliness on the

part of religious teachers. I do sometimes see clergymen listening to symphony concerts but I have never seen one whom I recognized in the Metropolitan or the Hispanic museums—or in the Brooklyn Museum—and Brooklyn is called the city of churches. “The excuse would be,” I concluded, “that they have no time.” That is no excuse. It is what we of this world say when we don’t go to church, and means nothing. There were such good portrait painters when the Wesleys walked the earth, I wondered if they sat to them or said they had no time. John did, for I saw his picture by Raeburn in the Weidner Museum last week, but when I wrote this I didn’t know that. That was the beginning of a train of thought that passes ceaselessly in my mind. I can’t help loving the evangelical churches for what they are becoming, they have a sense of kin with all people who look toward God from any angle. I only know what I read about them. But they treat art and artists as if a conspiracy of silence existed against them. Ruskin got back to his evangelical sympathies as he aged. The mystery of it all had lost its power to depress me—I had begun to be simple about it. The earth was the Lord’s and the fulness thereof, and the earth abounds in art and artists.

“I am going to be as simple as I please—defiantly simple,” I decided. “I can’t ask for material things

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in detail—that would seem too small to me—too naïve, too insistent upon the details we ought to work out for ourselves. But I can ask and obtain more and better correspondence with the Christian ethic—not easily—for there is no one to whom I can go to school. These wise clergymen school such as are to be of the churches. They waste a lot of Christ's energy. There are lots of us who need to be taught. We shouldn't get much out of the ordinary Sunday school, I fancy (although I have never been but once in a Sunday school).

I thought this kind of half-angry thought while I was bathing and changing into dinner clothes and then I sat a few moments more in my tiny upstairs veranda face to face with the unwelcome conclusion that Nicodemus had brought to Christ the kind of questions that was nearest to the things I carried round in my mind.

My passenger and my brother and the show and everyone and everything else faded; I had the wonderful sense of homecoming in the rooms that I had never seen before. These two days that seem so unimportant in the telling were the gateway to a more advanced practice than I thought to attain. I could think about discrepancies without depression, of these holy men who show no sympathy for beauty and of these makers of loveliness who are bitter-hearted and careless of each other. They

must come nearer to one another, and were most of them sounder people than I had been myself this time of the last year.

I had gained in simplicity, in the direct method; for whatever thoughts I had I could join—more or less imperfectly—to thoughts of Christ and a thousand discards achieved in an eliminative routine. Technically that is a great gain, but it has to be consciously practiced. Once mastered, the subconsciousness has been invaded and an involuntary response to the associative pull of Christ's exposition of the values of man's aspiration and initiation is established. It implies the discarding and substitution of thought and thought process. It is a lifework. To achieve an involuntary response to the standards of Christ one must be simple about them. Nicodemus had begun a quest for technique when he asked, "How can these things be?" That was what I wanted to find out. There was something amiss with his spirit or he would have learned more in that he would have been told more. There were lots of things amiss with my own but I forgot them. The old visions of the wise were being destroyed by new knowledge—reconstructed in a new light, as it must ever be to insure progress.



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## The Comedy of Terrors

TO BE a principal in a show is like swimming under water. No one sees you for a long time, during which you have not been stationary but progressing toward a definite point without an idea of what awaits you there. A thousand things may happen to spoil a show, a thousand fortuitous things may occur to make it go over "big." It is hard work and all one's friends come and say, "You'll not be rehearsing on to-morrow afternoon; come out in the boat with us." They never understand that one is leg-weary as the vanished cabhorse of my childhood, or that while a show is being pulled together the conductor and his aides have first call on everyone in it. My passenger spent many minutes at the telephone explaining that for me. On the day of our first complete general rehearsal I could see that something had happened to upset him. My brother saw it too. He had talked a lot with this man, assuming that he and I were friends, and I thought it would be a low thrust to tell him how our acquaintance had come about. He loved taking my brother's telephone calls too, and when the

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president of the bank in which he worked made a fishing date with us for the three days after the show, my passenger was transformed with interest and importance. It was his social chance and I didn't want to spoil it. I was going yachting; hence there was a place for him. His boss asked him because he thought he was our friend, and of course, he accepted. My brother said to me, "There's a lot to that youth; you had a good eye to discern it." I laughed at that but I wouldn't tell him why.

I had no opportunity to talk with him again. He was on in two scenes after me with a lot of other people, and on this morning of our first complete general rehearsal he put into my hands the names of a few of those who had tried to get through to us and vanished. A costumer was working on my clothes on a veranda when he appeared and announced that his young woman might be with us in a few hours. He said he had written her about me and that she had decided to come and talk with me herself. That didn't seem very important to me at the time, but I could see that to him it was portentous. "She didn't say positively she'd come," he repeated, miserably. I had to chide myself for recoiling from getting "mixed up with queer people." I had to remind myself that they were human beings, as—unamiable as it

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may appear—I often had to if people reached out to me from a circle which wasn't intersected by my own. Just here is the place to say that no man could have done two miracles within me, for miracles they still seem to me. The first and least of them was the taking away of a peculiar class consciousness, a set belief that only such as were artistically important or the same kind of people that my own people are, were worth admitting to one's association—much less one's friendship. And within that set belief I had the arrogance to fancy myself broad-minded for accepting artists on the merit of their accomplishment. There are lots of women like me, who in the easiest manner can turn a handshake into a gesture of repulsion; but for me, and with God's help, never again. I am very sentimental and unreasonable about this. I wish I had never caused pain by the lightness with which I have performed boycotts.

The more important miracle was the change in my reverie. It came as a gift. I hadn't tried to bring it about; it merely happened. When I got into bed at night I used to dread the things that would pass through my mind before it would become blank. They were often added to, but the principal tortures habitually besetting me were the thought of the last morning of my husband's life, the things I had seen in war time, the disgusting

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stories that are always going round about someone I love who is unable to refute them, any mistake I may have made in the course of the day, the reaction and behavior of a member of my family who dislikes me—with reason—and the fact that my son wrote to me very rarely. I could have a horrid time with any of those thoughts every evening between eleven and two. I never think of them now. There was too a predisposition to a certain reconstructive effort that is very usual and unproductive and the foe of individualism in fiction writers—a tendency to remember rather than invent. It results in a repetition of situation and atmosphere, and is a consequence of the lack of energy that I had floundered in. I did try consciously to overcome that, but in the general substitution the other things departed without my effort.

I had no time to think about my passenger. His young woman hadn't materialized and when the first public performance was over, about half past twelve—five days since we had spoken of her—I dashed through the garden with a flashlight to get gladly into bed. The day had been long, the work constant. We had consumed hasty meals in silence, the newspapers had not been read. It had seemed to me as if all that was new and lovely had resolved itself into a little story about a not too

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interesting man and woman and a few pretty songs and madrigals. I looked forward to my few moments of religious practice before I went to sleep. They wouldn't be many but I should get back on my foundation, rest on it. I was thinking that the stage manager had been quick to notice the new me; he had written me a charming note to say how deeply he was aware of my interest in the other principals who were professional and had their bread and butter to make by pleasing the public, and that I had done all that I could to feature them. I may as well explain that I used never to notice them, unless they were well known and agreeable in themselves. It was charming of him to write that note, unnecessary and courteous, and it made me happy. But life seemed too petty and detailed for any heroic moment to develop from it.

I opened the sitting-room door to find a large, rather handsome, very defiant woman staring at me with eyes of hate. She told me that I knew why she had come. I asked her who she was. When she told me she was my passenger's Jane, I was a little frightened, but my intense desire to help my passenger strengthened and I sent out a thought toward the power I had to have in order to see this thing through. My maid, white-faced, handed me a little piece of paper upon which she had written: "Shall I call someone? This lady is



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very mad." I asked her for a pencil and wrote with it, "I think I can manage her." I had the sense of that loyal little creature's watchful presence throughout the interview, learning afterward that she had sat shuddering on the edge of the bathtub in the bathroom just beyond until I came to be undressed and she knew that my life was spared. "I thought you were a young woman," my visitor burst out.

I thought that my passenger had been teasing her and told her so. But she explained that she didn't realize that an elderly person could influence him.

"Influence him to what?" I asked her. I was very much interested.

She became very violent and abusive. She told me what she thought of me. Trouble-maker was the least of the things she found applicable. She also said that having outlived the period in which I could command the romantic attachment of mankind I was trying to abort other women's love affairs and spoil their trips to Europe. She felt that if my life were investigated in unprejudiced fashion, it would be found to be very impure, and as evidence of this supposition she adduced the damning items that I smoked and wore pyjamas. I told her that I would like not to smoke, not because she thought it wrong but because—only for myself—I did, because I smoked too much. I ex-

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plained that women called upon to travel much by land or water, love pyjamas as being practical and really modest, and that I believed that the old-fashioned nightgown would soon be relegated to one act of "Lucia di Lammermoor," which, in my opinion, couldn't get on without it. "Don't dare joke with me," she yelled. And just there she called me an impossible word. I didn't know what it meant. I had never heard it before, but I looked it up in the dictionary next day and my brother told me it is indissolubly linked to sailors' boarding houses. I was seeing life.

I called my maid and told her to get us some supper. I never take supper at night, but this wild woman had driven all day and had had no food. There was a meal downstairs for the asking, and presently we sat opposite one another drinking hot bouillon. She leaned over to the chair from which the banned pyjamas were hanging and asked me what I paid for them. "I didn't pay for them," I answered. "I have a friend whose husband is an ambassador or minister to Japan. She sends me these things every Christmas." As we made toast on the electric toaster and scrambled eggs for her, she continued to ask me all sorts of personal questions. She seemed to be possessed of a devil of rudeness and censoriousness. She kicked holes in the king's English. But she was handsome.

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"I must get on now," she said at last, "but I hope you realize just where you get off."

"Where are you going?" I asked as mildly as I could. I have never been spoken to as that woman spoke to me. It would be idle to pretend that I enjoyed it. The abuse wasn't so bad but the not heaving her out for her criticisms and personal questions took a bit of doing.

"I am going to the Inn," she said.

"Have you a room reserved?" I inquired.

She gave it as her opinion that in a one-horse burg like this any guest at any time of night would be welcome.

I reached for the telephone, proffered my request, and handed her the receiver. The night clerk had recognized my voice and explained that he would like to do what he could for me but that he had had to put up a tent to contain the mechanics for the show. He hadn't a hole or corner.

"I've sent my bag down there. What shall I do? Where shall I go?" My visitor was fearfully upset.

"I've an extra bed in my room; you may have it," I answered.

Just then my brother's voice sounded from below demanding with fury why I didn't go to bed. I told him very meekly that I had to put up a belated traveler and that if he would very kindly

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send his man over with a pair of pyjamas, she would be very grateful, as mine were too small. I enjoyed outraging her respectability—if it really did—more than I can say.

“Suppose,” I went on, “you finish your supper while I take my bath. Then you can bathe.”

She agreed.

My brother's man was below the window. He said, “Catch, madam?” I answered, “Yes,” and handed my passenger's poor goose a thickish pair of really masculine pyjamas. I couldn't help laughing, I had been so dreadfully frightened; the woman had been so rude and violent and now she was as mild as a May morning. But in the bathroom my little maid begged me to let her take my sheets across the hall to her room and bed, but I said: “No. I want to see if I can get something across to this woman,” I added.

I prayed that I might show this rampant animal something that would change her into a mind which thinks of Christ.

“How did you know I smoked?” I asked her when I emerged clean and comfortable, to get into bed.

She said that my passenger had written her.

“Did he tell you anything else?” I continued.

She conveniently couldn't remember.

I meant to stay awake and talk with her for a

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time, but I had rehearsed so long and the food and the bath were so persuasive that I fell asleep thinking among other lovelier things that people always write home about the unpleasant features of anyone who tries to be kind to them.

Long before morning I woke wondering at a noise I heard. Someone was weeping. I couldn't think who—not my maid, not my brother, not the soprano—I remembered, and jumped up. I went to the other bed and took the poor soul in my arms. "I'm not such a bad old thing when you get to know me," I said. "You may tell me all this tale of yours if you'd like to." She sobbed on and on with my arm round her, I could tell it comforted her.

### UNDESIRED AUTHORITY

That poor girl lay on the bed and sobbed on, but I felt that she had hit the bottom and was coming up a little—against her will. For the time being everything she did was against her will. It was against her better judgment to talk but it was beyond her power to keep still. The thing she most wanted to do was to sting me—because I was at hand—and her attempts at this were as funny as they were futile. For instance, when I put a piece of ice in a towel and rubbed her face with it, she told me that the only other person she had known



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who had used ice in this way was a girl who had been expelled from college for immoral behavior. I wanted to laugh at her but I didn't dare risk it. It was a good while before she stopped quivering and sobbing and lay with a still, relaxed body and a vaguely wandering mind. I felt it would be wise not to talk to her just then.

The garden had begun to show color under the lifting darkness and the sea was paling, its surface was like polished steel. It was so lovely out of doors that I did what was, I fear, unpleasantly characteristic of me, I forgot all about her for a moment until she said, suddenly, "I wish I was dead."

I had had just about enough of that sort of thing.

"I wish I *were* dead sounds better," I rejoined, pettishly.

"It sounds affected to me." She said that in a voice of no special conviction, the empty listless voice of a person who had given up caring about anything but who could still observe the meaningless detail of life and language.

I was glad of an impersonal topic and defended the subjunctive. Her retort was that I probably was speaking of the best English. Quite tonelessly she said that she wasn't accustomed to the best anything. It was a net statement without dramatic

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accent. Her excitement had all died down, she was sincere and despairing. The excitement of the game she had been playing had passed and she knew herself the loser. She left off trying to draw me, and very quietly and categorically paraded her self-pity, her privations, her pretenses. As narrative it all lacked interest, but as a mind centered on the third-rate sensations of an aggressive nonentity it was an amazing record of unproductive egotism. Respectably and orally undeclared, sex appetite was still perfectly apparent through her whole story, and was its most normal and wholesome feature. Her brother had fostered in her his silly mania for an appearance of primness, and outside her paid task her mind was totally unemployed except with the daydreams of desire. She was so broken down that she no longer tried to hide the workings of her mind. She had been in hell and didn't like it there. Silently, for months, all her thoughts had been centered on a life that she found she couldn't pursue. I did admire her lack of reserve; it didn't disgust me in the least. It seems to me now, as it did then, the one heroic thing about her. In honesty she was up to date, but in nothing else. "I suppose you read a lot?" I said, mendaciously—for I was quite sure she didn't.

"No," she answered, "I can't blame my thoughts

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on any books, they all came into my mind of themselves."

"Every normal person has those ideas if he lets them flow unstemmed through his mind. You're not bad—you're nothing so dramatic—you are just weak," I told her, sounding quite as presuming as I really was. But she minded my thinking her weak, not my saying so. She challenged me to tell her how anyone could alter his habitual reverie. When I told her by acquiring a new mental habit she said that was impossible, and this time I did laugh at her. "If," I demanded, "I tell you approximately what thoughts you have every night between the time you lie down in bed and the time you go to sleep will you let me tell you what thoughts you might have—not only then, but for protracted periods and as a basis for action?" She was a little sulky but at last she said she would—she told me afterward that she was filled with curiosity and pleased that I had said every normal person could have her habitual reverie. She had evidently begun to regard herself as abnormal.

I put on a coat and scooted into the unlocked bungalow of a young psychologist who lived with his mother down the road. Entering their living room I picked up a book I had been reading there but a day or two before, in which the reverie of a woman, the victim of a love episode gone stale for

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lack of aspiration sufficient to fortify the mind in the protracted postponement of actual mating, was clearly set forth. That book gave me enormous standing in the mind of my new friend. To be able to show her in print what she had thought, convinced her that I was a dependable person. She said that she had thought every one of the recorded items and more too.

She went on to read what was suggested as cure for such cases and when she came to a clause that said a much-to-be-desired, fatigue-producing activity was impossible for most people like those described, because they had usually given up graduate training or technical progress in favor of their poisonous daydreams, she said there was one thing she did want to do—to nurse drug addicts. She had read about narcotics. She also told me that the most worthy way in which a life could be spent was in the prevention and palliation of the drug habit. She evidently longed to devote her life to the care of those queer, poor souls who get off the track so amazingly, who do murders without motives and who can't recall them two hours later. One of her youthful friends, very much above her in the social scale, had become a drug fiend. She lay on the bed, quiet and relaxed, and told me all about it, adding details which we have learned to be untrue although she has since substituted

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enough horrors that are perfectly authentic to make up for them. If she hadn't seen for herself what such people suffer she might have been tempted to forget her own life in narcotized illusory coma, so she felt.

I listened to her, and if I had been a hypnotist I could have coerced her wordlessly to some course of healthy action, but I'm not. Presently she read to me the cruel and blundering letter my passenger had sent her, describing our drive and his activities in our occupied but simple routine. He said I was an uncontrolled cigarette fiend. If he had also said that I am over fifty, on the stout side, and have gray hair, my new friend and I never should have met. She would not have begged leave to visit a sick friend—which was what she did—and come across the state to rail at me.

She interrupted this reflection by saying that he got on with people so well while she stuck in the mud. "He mixes up," was the way she put it, "and I mix down."

"Taking this trip together won't help either of you very much," I observed.

"He doesn't want to go any more, and I have nothing to put in the place of what I've lost." She came up to the fact at last and faced it.

Then I began by explaining to her my theory of substituted excitements. I wanted to attempt



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something impersonal but relevant, that we might avoid further hysterics. I said I believed in spiritual exercises—mental practices that brought one nearer the mind of Christ. But I suddenly felt so sententious and stilted, so presuming and without sanction, so remote from the eloquence and finesse one associates with efforts to better the moral and emotional status of human beings that I wanted to abandon the girl on the basis of its being none of my business. Then I realized in a wave of sympathy for all those who attempt to minister to the tortured minds of men, that everyone bumps up against his own insufficiency just when he needs power, and as a child might I put out this prayer—strictly speaking, it put itself out. “Somehow, by reading a book, but I have not been able to trace how, there bloomed in my consciousness a knowledge of you—the classical and constructive Christ, the brilliant potency that is in you and that is you. Purify my intention and inform my mind so that I may put this enervated human creature within call. I want her to hear your voice. I don’t want to actuate her; I couldn’t advise her. Let me drag her to the point of earshot whence she may pick up the sound and significance of a message you have spoken for her. ‘Thine is the power.’ ”

She said I had the “flossy” ideas of people of a sheltered life, and that I had nothing practical to

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offer as a means of bringing about the better states of mind that I claimed existed. I suggested religious technique, and she asked me what that meant.

"For the moment," I confessed, "it is my hobby. The religious technique I am trying to attain is a skilled and conscious response to the teachings of Christ, the application of his power."

"That's not practical," she said.

"It works odd Mondays and even matinees," I answered, as one says of opera performances.

"How?" she demanded. "You interest me, because the principal point of criticism I make about Christianity is that the one point of infection—of contagion—is church."

"It's *a* point," I answered.

"You can't acquire a technique in music or in physical exercise without practicing," she cried out.

"Nor can you in the Christian religion, in my opinion," I said.

"What would you practice?"

"I do practice lifting my life to the level of the thoughts that come to me after reading the New Testament."

"Only the New Testament?"

"No, a few books by more modern devotees of Christ as well."

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"How do you practice?"

"I read a passage that accuses me—many of the passages in the New Testament accuse us unless we have taken preventive treatment of some kind before reading them. I then wonder why I feel accused, try to find what I do—preferably to what I have done, that makes me feel accused—and then I look for strength in what—were I a saint—I should probably call meditation."

"That's too general to mean very much. I should have to be made to understand by an example."

Fascinating as it is to discuss oneself, one would rather do it—if, like myself, one is rather a snob—with one's social equals. But I gave her an example that belongs here.

"In my family connection is a lady of parts—kin of mine—who is very clever, but who is not always wise. She loves to seem right about things, which—in the last analysis—is a low taste. If she isn't right, she tries to prove herself so. She really dislikes me, and has reason to, for I have derided her and undermined her prestige sometimes. I have refused to look at life from where she stands. She has the power of provoking me with a thousand pretenses and a few statements that I think are lies. I have lied to her, so I can't tell why her lying to me bores me so.

"I was one day depressed by Christ's evident

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opinion that persecution was to be a part of life for his followers until his ethic prevails. I sat thinking about that after reading in the New Testament and thinking that I couldn't feel happy religiously because it was depressing to think of that—when this practice of mine came into my mind and I said: 'I'll stop that; it's against his ethic.' I had given a part of each day to angry thoughts of my kinswoman, and I was conscious of the fact that I had always heard anything to her detriment with satisfaction."

"Were you able to do anything about it?" came to me eagerly from the bed.

"I was. I drove sixty miles to see her and only contradicted her twice. When she criticized my friends I merely yawned—which was a far finer response than what had been usual between us. She loves to have her things admired and I was able to praise several of them without choking—on the whole the ethics were workable. The next day, instead of snorting with rage, as I usually did after a visit to her, and looking for sympathy and deriding her, I clean forgot her in what I was doing, and I could pray for her as one does pray for people if one thinks of them with kindness when trying to think through to the mind of Christ. I did that actually in the evening as I sat alone."

"I can't control my thoughts," the figure on the

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bed announced. "It is agreed by everyone who knows anything that it is impossible."

"How about Descartes?" I inquired.

"He's a high-brow I've missed," she answered.

She was impressed by books, so I went to the shelf and took down the *Critique* of Descartes, which I had brought with me, and showed her his third maxim, in the beginning of which he says among other things, "And generally to accustom myself to believe that there is nothing in our power so entirely as our thoughts."

Anyone who reads this might well wonder how the woman had stood me so long, but the telling of it sounds more priggish and didactic than I was.

"What was your first technical exercise?" she asked me.

"Finding an approach to Christ like mine by examining the classic approaches to him recorded in the Gospels."

She told me she didn't see much use in that, and I replied that I wanted to see what he first said to those who came within his knowledge as I had.

"Do you mind telling me how long it took you to find your approach?"

"Not long," I answered. "Nicodemus taught me a lot—or, rather, what was said to him; but later I had a note from someone whose mind was a



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window through which I saw these things first, and I sometimes think he found my approach in the man with the withered hand."

She thought I had chosen a queer way to read the Bible.

"I think it would be ridiculous for me to read it as if I were accustomed to the mental habits of Christians," I said in explanation, "or as if I knew all the characters upon whom the mind of Christ had risen like a moon of mercy and a sun of mandate. Everyone knows bits of his teaching, but they swim about in our memories like fish in the garden pools; we admire them, sometimes in the light of poetic adjustment they sparkle, but we never catch them to live by. They have for us at most the use of impersonal beauty."

She said it was a new idea to her that people were not equally well equipped to read the Bible—she was rather pious about that. I didn't want to argue with her—the atmosphere of argument would have destroyed our approach to one another. I waited for her to speak again. To my surprise she asked me for a spiritual exercise. The giving of that exercise was my opportunity. I didn't want to give it; it put me in a place of responsibility, but I knew I could help her, I knew that if I could show her that Christ is a power, she could learn through him to help herself. It

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was only five feet to my writing table, but that distance was measured in terms of my new character and social function—the distance between what I had been and what, as yet, I didn't quite want to be. I didn't want the responsibility of showing other people how. But I felt absolutely sure that I knew how. I was positive that I could devise a spiritual exercise that would help that woman, but I didn't want to go on record. I can't explain it. I wasn't shy any longer, I wasn't indifferent exactly. But I didn't want to get up and go to that table and write down what I believed would prove a curative formula. In looking back on that moment of indecision and spiritual anarchy—for it was that—I have often wondered at it. There were a thousand reasons for it, but my ignorance was the first and most causative. It would be a commonplace to many people brought up in a certain kind of church to say I must give all to Christ to achieve spiritual progress, but I never intended or strove to give even as much as I had given. I sat wondering where my pity for my new friend had gone to. I realized slowly that I could do something actually for the kingdom of God if I could help that creature to step up to a higher level; but as I walked toward the table I was as destitute of any great emotion or fine feeling as if I were sitting there to write out the household

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checks. Yet it was the first time I had ever consciously tried to do anything for the honor of Christ and as an evidence of his power. My impulse to pray had gone. I was like some poor musical *débutante* who finds herself alone on the concert stage before a not too friendly audience with nothing of her own to help her but the technique she had acquired in solitary hours of tonal and executive experiment. But I had practiced—I could play my little piece. I knew the notes and the time. I picked up the pen. “Everything we gain in spiritual power is paid for in advance,” I wrote. “Everything we gain for our memories we have first learned by experience or from books. Memory is important to religious progress. We must remember what we were before we paid for and received our advance in spiritual power in order to measure our gains. The spiritual exercise I recommend to you is to think for fifteen minutes of the noblest way out of your present dilemma and then to read the story of the death of Christ in John’s Gospel and turn to a reasonable contemplation of your troubles from any angle you please.”

I put the little paper in her hand and left her with it while I went out to examine the new day. The hour was unfamiliar to me and very lovely. She followed me out with the paper in her hand,

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and questioned me about it, evidently thinking I had arranged a mental activity for her at random. She announced that the religious way was to read the Bible first of all. I answered that I would go inside and write on a piece of paper why I chose that exercise for her if she decided to practice it.

After a few moments of visible indecision she said she would do as I suggested if only for curiosity. Then I wrote on a bit of paper like the first: "The reason I suggest to you to think alone of the noblest way in which you could extricate yourself from your present problem is that I believe that after reading of the nobility of Christ your mind will function on a new and higher level, and that, remembering its tone before you reread the story of his words and deeds, you will see what he does for us in the strong light of your conscious and recorded experiment." I put that paper in an envelope and asked her not to read it until eleven o'clock. Then I laughed at myself and went swimming.

I had to lunch out, but I was full of a sense of having dared and of having planted a seed that I knew to be viable in the soil of another's mind. I had prayed, I had been able to put my tinkling tune across because I had practiced it in the quiet of my garden. I had applied the power of prayer and there was a humbling triumph in that. The

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only sad thing about it all was that strangers look to one for aid when those near to one won't. It was nearly five when I got back and found my guest's car at the door with her bag strapped on ready for departure. She too was dressed to travel, but she awaited a word with me before her departure. She admitted without any hedging that what I had told her was true. She was sweet and not the least expansive, and beyond a strange avowal that "spiritual ambition" was awakened within her, took her place in the driver's seat. But when she had circled the large plot before the door she paused and approached it again.

"What have you forgotten?" I demanded.

"Nothing," she replied; "but when you say 'God,' what associated idea comes to you? I can't visualize God."

"Nor can I," I admitted. "Christ himself said to his hearers, 'You have not seen God at any time,' not even with the mind's eye, I suppose."

"That doesn't answer my question," she persisted. "What associated idea comes to you when you say 'God'?"

"The mind of Christ."

She nodded and was off.

When I went upstairs I found the envelope to the little paper I had put there for her to open at eleven o'clock. The paper itself was gone.



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### THE ÉTUDE OF THE EMPTY CROSS

Late supper after our last evening's performance was a festival of farewell. Our troupe was breaking up with dance and song and a sense of satisfaction that our efforts had brought in more than the sum we had been imported to make for the local hospital. I was looking forward to the cruise of a fortnight on the yacht of some friends of mine. They are charming and their boat is a byword for comfort. We love the same pastimes and we share a detailed sympathy with the colonial life of early America. It was a bond between us that there should be no parties and none on board beside our host and hostess, their three young sons with a tutor, a paid bridge instructor, and me. That promised a time after our own hearts.

They had supper with the troupe and we were all saying our farewells when my passenger asked if he might have a private word with me. He led me to a bench somewhere outside the supper room from which a dance orchestra sounded saxophonically. I was more conscious of the summer life that music typified than I was of him. Fatigue poisons one's appreciations, and I felt everything about me to have become suddenly transient and trivial. I longed to be free of everyone and sleep; my mood had changed toward the young man be-

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side me because I had gained sympathy for the woman he had hurt. That is the usual process of the natural man! I couldn't recapture my early fervent desire to help him, I could only love one person at a time. He was absolutely sure of my interest, however. "You will be delighted at what I have to tell you," he began, and I just managed to stop myself from saying, "I shan't care a penny's worth." It was on the tip of my tongue. I yawned instead.

"That young woman I told you about was here to-day. She has let me off and I am free again," he declared with an actual sob of relief. "The trip is off, all that good money is unspent. Oh, you brought me luck, more than I can talk about just now."

My body was sore with singing, but I managed to ask if she were nice about it.

He was beaming: "More than that," he said; "she was generous, not a reproach, not one. I had given up expecting her and when I saw her I was terrified."

"But she fixed it all up?" I inquired, rising.

He asked me if I didn't want to hear about it. I didn't, so I said I had no time; the searchlight had been turned on the steep path to the shore and my hosts were waiting. I didn't then take in the full implication of what I had been told. I fell

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asleep in the launch and was hauled up the side—I never knew how—much less how I got to bed.

I woke very early when it was still dark. The ship's clock sounded two bells and brought to me very swiftly the sense of changed environment and the freedom of an unplanned day. I realized in a flash that the conditions were ideal for the renewal of my quest for a religious technique. I lay there wondering again if going to church is ever an adequate religious technique. I ended by believing it is for lots of people, but I couldn't see it as very vital. "I haven't got there yet," I told myself. Then I realized in another flash that the great wish of my heart was to have a deep sense and continuous consciousness of Christ's cross, that I was always wondering about its modern implications, that I often wished that I responded as saints and poets, musicians and philosophers have to its mystery and glory.

Did I really feel it had any mystery and glory?

I recalled the crucifixes I knew well enough to remember. Memling's altar piece at Granada interrupted my earliest efforts with an insistent clarity of recollection. I was quite sure after a few minutes that I could test my idea of pulling the mind up to the level of realization of Christ and response to his cross by some sort of spiritual exercise, then and there—I could at least begin. I ex-

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pected the process to be long. I determined to begin it with prayer, a rather rugged petition that was very like, "People all over the world, perhaps in other worlds, are praying at this moment for guidance—I mean it." In spite of the implied criticism of other petitioners I think my prayer was concisely and beautifully answered in two ways, after my mind was lifted away from this one pictured crucifixion with its burden of a dead Redeemer. First, I felt approved in this new attempt by remembering the value Doctor Jones put on the cross of Christ. I hadn't then read a second book of his called *Christ at the Round Table*,<sup>1</sup> in which he says: "For weeks and months after I was converted, I wondered why anyone should preach anything except the cross. The redemptive glowing mystery of it had taken hold of my inmost being and I felt that this was life and all else trifling. I feel so still." I knew how he felt from *The Christ of the Indian Road* and I envied him his visualization, his spiritual preoccupation with its climax of realization strong enough to make such an avowal possible. I saw there that perhaps if I threaded my way through all thoughts that come to me about Christ's cross, I might choose a pattern that would lead to him like a path to love and understanding. It was a little bit like preparing to scale a physical

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<sup>1</sup> The Abingdon Press, New York.

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height in Switzerland, where each day the guide urges one to better time over a known path and then leads one up a little farther on "*le terrain inconnu*."

Since my hour in the garden at home with Bach's Matthew "Passion," I had often worshiped—I can use that word with truth—Christ on his way to Calvary. Bach had been with him and with the people who gazed out on him from their different spiritual levels, and he had led me there. Then I wondered if religious people would think it wicked to try for religious expansion as one would try for the development of secular knowledge, and I came to the conclusion that they would. They like mysterious, uncharted ways of getting at things and are very jealous of new ways, I thought. But my way might not be a new one. I might be only setting out to record a mental process that is familiar to all minds occupied with Christ, only perhaps they practice faith thoughts and Christian appreciation in churches and on their knees. I remember I was discouraged as I felt the boat slow down and knew we were running into a harbor—I had heard we were to stop at an island for telegrams. I went to the porthole to get a look at an unfamiliar scene and to shake off the ideas that were oppressing me. I was no less determined, but my ardor was momentarily dampened. "Why



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try," I thought, "for what is given to other people?" I remembered a bitter cold night and its hours by the remains of a wood fire and realized that it had been given to me—I merely wanted more.

We were without motion now and from my cabin I saw nothing but the gray-shingled side of a house used by fishers. I threw on a coat and went on deck, where a scene met my eyes not unlike the coast of Cornwall in that headlands towered out of a fog that lingered thick in the coves between them. Seaward it was clear. As I watched, the heavy mist floated up and out of the cove nearest our boat, and I saw a cross glitter in the sun. We were moving away a moment later, but the empty cross showed still above the fog, and the white cone of the steeple under it was plain above a little village before we rounded a headland and were gone. What a sight that was for me on that morning of all mornings! I had an awed feeling that my prayers had been answered from a church, and that gilded symbol, so instantaneously apropos, has come to be a memorized bulwark of sure beauty above the veils that obscure the physical and moral outlines of our lives. Perhaps, had I been more sensitive, I should have looked upon that cross, so comforting and yet so stimulating, as a rebuke to all my doubts of creeds and congrega-

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tions. But that idea never occurred to me. I simply felt that from the spire of a church the heavenly beacon had flashed and that all churches were a little bit mine because of that one.

We all slept for an hour every day after luncheon in our shipboard routine. This new habit caused me to be very wide awake about two o'clock every morning, so that uninterrupted and almost at once I chose a few rules to govern my mental attempts, not rules that could never be broken, but items of agreement with what appealed to me as fair and sensible. Why not just pray and let it go at that? I asked myself: but my prayers were violent wishes rather than intelligent efforts, and it didn't seem fair to ask extraneous power to achieve my end when perhaps I had a power within myself. I determined as a beginning of what I have since called the *Étude* of the Empty Cross, to give all associative thought about the cross of Christ due consideration and to write it down. "Isn't that what a clergyman who makes a sermon does?" I asked myself. I thought it was not. I thought they picked and chose thoughts that they could refute if they were dangerous to conventionalized faith, or thoughts that were beautiful; but I doubted if they chose thoughts and then deliberately recalled them again and again for the strengthening and renewing of their minds. Good

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thoughts encouraged to recur become valuable obsessive images. I began to record very consciously at ten minutes to three on a Monday morning much as one begins a magazine story or an educational report, fearful of the sentimental approach because it often leads to incoherence but perfectly aware that there is no religion without emotion. I wished I could pray to order, as it were, but I hoped to learn and I remembered that even the disciples had to be taught to pray. What a comfort that has been to me!

As I held my pencil and began to write a sentence very small, the crucifix and my gleaming empty cross above the mists alternated before my mind's eye. First I would see one, then the other, and I applied my rule about accepting associative thought. If my way to a real sense of the sacrifice on Calvary began with the—as I always classify them—Roman Catholic and Protestant symbols, then I must examine them. A Soul on Calvary was given to humanity, who has accepted it and hammered it into a system, flashed across my mind. Then I realized that an attempted technique might be responsible for a part of any and each religious system. I thought of a phrase from Hadfield's *Psychology and Morals* about Crusades dying off into cults, and that was the net result of my attempt at practicing a pattern. I was staying

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awake too long, the two symbols were changing place too often. My hostess had put a little book she had bought in an old house in Canada on my bookshelf to keep the others from sliding with the motion of the boat. She said it was dull and I needed a dull book to make me sleepy; I began it. It was called *The Life of Thomas Ellwood*, a friend of John Milton's and a very persecuted Quaker. As he lengthily exposed himself to posterity he was really touched with a sense of the divine, but to be anxious to suffer for his own opinions rather than for Christ struck me as his unusual desire. He felt it was spiritually important to keep his hat on when talking with his father.

We got letters the next day and my hostess looked frightfully perturbed as she put one of hers aside. When her husband came in, she pointed to it and he read it to the end very gravely—"These schoolmasters make me sick," he said. "Have you told Jack?"—Jack was their second son. She shook her head dismally.

"Jack," she explained to me, "is very bad in English composition and has to write one composition a month that is acceptable or drop back a form. The subjects are assigned and this month the lunatic who is his English master has chosen 'A Great Man's Whim.' "

"Charles V of Spain liked clocks," I said.

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"Philip II of the same address liked priests," Jack himself suggested. He had just come on deck from his morning lessons and was wide awake and full of ideas.

His mother handed him the letter and his face fell like a soufflé grown cold. "That's a kick in the teeth," he said. "I bet you that dirty dog sat up nights to think of that subject." All through luncheon we suggested men and names, trying to cheer him up. His elder brother was going ashore to get his hair cut and came to his father for some money, forgetting to take off his cap as he came in to the saloon. The youngest child—rather a self-righteous person—suggested that he remove it. His mother and I at the same moment said that the supreme heroism of Thomas Ellwood had been to keep his hat on when he talked with his father. We explained and laughed and Jack cried out suddenly, "There's a good whim for you—who's got that book?" He was immersed in it for the whole afternoon, lying full length in a deck chair beside mine until he had finished it and after I had gone to bed that evening he came into my cabin and read me his completed composition, whose caption was "Keep your hat upon your head, for you may need it when you're dead." He began by saying that grandees of the era of the celebrated Thomas Ellwood overdid bows and hat wavings excessively,



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and that Quakers were religiously disinclined to such rubbish. (When I asked him if Ellwood really were famous, he said he didn't know but if he were so and the English master had never heard of him, he would be "sore" and that would be grand.) Then he described with vigor how Ellwood's father knocked him down for wearing a hat in his presence. Then he asked sympathy for the whim of this youth who was undoubtedly sincere and courageous. He ended by saying, "Perhaps we do not understand him because we cannot think in the fashion of an older day, and no saint of past ages can carry a modern man all the way up to Paradise in his arms; but I think the people who read about Ellwood will get a big hint about living up to their standards although they have to rely on the experimentation of contemporaries for light on the morals of to-day."

"I like your composition a lot," I told him, "but how do you know a saint of old can't make a modern man saintly?"

Jack sat down on the shoe box and looked at me a long time before he answered, "I think about things like that quite a lot," he said, "and I'm sure he can't."

"So do I think a lot," I answered. He felt as shy as I did, and we eyed one another mistrustfully. He excused his interest by saying, "Next

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year I may not have time to think; I'll probably be in college."

"Go ahead and tell me about the saints," I urged him.

"It sounds like a seedman's spring advertisement, and don't repeat it to mother; she admires everything we say and tells her friends and makes horrible situations—perfectly frightful."

"Have a heart, Jack," I answered, sadly. "All mothers do that; forgive us. Go ahead."

"An old-world saint can't guide a modern man entirely because he didn't ever have as much put up to him as the man of to-day. They face ten situations when he faced one. And the church does too. I look at it like this: Christianity had one or two noticeable blooms at its start, Saint Paul and Constantine, martyrs, and whoever. Then it was blighted here and there by too much frost or too much fervor. Perhaps it was weakened by parasites—a little bit, you know. Now it's a big plant; it's like a modern man for extent and variety of problems. There's the renewing of its soil, the weakening of the plant itself by the multifloral character of its bloom and the increase of parasitic attack from new and unexplained parasites, Japanese beetles barging in, et cetera. Life touches men from every old where to-day and they can't get patterns for their conduct from holy men of

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old who only had to do one thing to have a halo handed to them."

"Is Christ still applicable to all modern situations?" I inquired rather breathlessly.

"I like to believe he is," Jack said, simply, "but how many situations do I know?"

"Or how much of Christ do we know," I suggested.

"Well," he answered, "believe it or not, but I'm going to be a teacher because the Christian thing appeals to me. If I became a minister, it would be doing what other men thought I could do—synods and people telling me where to get off—and I know I can teach. The reason I bother with this idiotic English is that I want to get by in style, so I won't have a record against me when I try to get a place in a school."

After he had gone his mother came in for a moment. "I have a confession to make," she said, laughing, "I didn't think Thomas Ellwood a dull book, but I believed you would so I called it so."

"It's made a hit with Jack," I observed.

"I can't fathom Jack," she said, sadly. "I know pretty well what my other sons are but Jack chests his cards habitually."

"He'll tell you what he wants to do when he wants to do it," I told her, "and our sons are afraid of us. We babble about them too much."

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"They're crazy about him at school," she began.

"Now you're off—we all begin like that," I lay in my bed and laughed at her.

She grew quite pink. "Do you want 'Thomas' to read?" she asked.

"No, thanks; I'm for sleep." She said her husband wanted to read the book and departed. We always allude to this book as "Thomas," and it has a place of permanence in the minds of that family and some of their friends. I love it because it brought me close to Jack, who has become a great friend of mine, and Jack loves it because it, he insists, aided him spiritually. I found it not quite for my needs. Thomas was a saint of old who had not faced my problems, exactly as Jack said. Although I sympathize with and admire him, I realize that he cannot see life in its fullness as saints do who walk the world to-day, even although I have not the vision of a saint and am just a woman of the world who has seen Christ through the window of a book and who has tried to follow him for love of his presence.

When I woke early in the morning after this episode and looked at the record of the pattern I had begun to trace, I found nothing that seemed very promising. "If one habitually contemplated a crucifix as a means of approach to the cross of Christ, would it bring a different sense to the mind

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from that of habitual contemplation of an empty cross? Why not think about the thieves' crosses? Why only try to get a meaning from the cross for oneself? One can be spiritually greedy—why not? The cross is the beginning of nobly vicarious life." That was all I had written down—nothing very conclusive, and one statement actually untrue, for I feel that maternity is the classic beginning of nobly vicarious life.

As I watched Calvary from my place in the ages I could not see Christ's cross as separate from the thieves' crosses. As yet I could not be alone with it; I was so conscious of being only one of the multitude to whom it has become the way, the truth, and the life. From where I stood—the standpoint of my limitations and capacities, my impediments and facilities—I felt that the silhouette that crowned the summit of sacrifice was three crosses actually and should be so acknowledged. There was meaning in their proximity, and one dare not disarrange a fact. To do that is a sort of lying that leads to madness. I was at the very bottom of the holy hill and it was as yet merely a spectacle. I was elbowed by other watchers. Their eyes seemed to catch mine for a moment without one thought of country or chronology; their voices reached my ears, raised in a clamor of interpretation, adoration, admonition, and purely personal



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appeal. Each of those minds had a personal reaction to this wonder of the spirit at this hour of sacrifice. We draw much nearer to one another as we converge on those crosses. They occupy the summit of a height; we cannot stand far apart and press forward too. I could not perhaps share this onlooker's visualization of Christ's birth, or read into it that meaning, or impute to it this magic; he might not be able to accept a circumstance in my presentment of the resurrection that is vital to me. But here beside these three crosses whose shadows fall across most human consciousness as a shelter in the wilting glare of material desire, we share a common mood of wonder, and a common prayer, that somewhere in the level of our lives we may redeem and be redeemed. I took up my record and scratched out the sentence about the beginning of nobly vicarious life, forcing my memory back on last night's ideas and images. Then I wrote the answer that dawns in every mind in contemplation of Christ's cross, the answer to the question, "What more can a man do than lay down his life for his friend?" His sacrifice can be for all humanity, friend and foe alike. I deliberately reviewed my roll call of those who have labored to reduce epidemics without one thought of who their patients were, and in my memory I found a monument in Alexandria to Pasteur's able

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aide in the cholera epidemic. I thought again of Doctor Jones' letter and its direction to be simple—the only really technical direction I had. There is none wiser.

I wanted to get away from a mere recollection of people who stood for noble things—"I'm not the telephone book of Paradise," I protested. I do not know that my mind process then could be called meditation or could be called prayer, but I lay quiet in that sweet, dark solitude holding my mind open to the mind of Christ. A sense of his presence rose in me, that flooding sense of light by which one sees humanity as a holy if humble brotherhood. "Everyone, everyone, everyone," sounded in my mind as a perfect tone sounds in one's physical ear. I was bitterly hurt by the sudden memory of a Spandau Jewess who had usurped the privilege of the cross, had worn it as a conspicuous ornament to command attention in the shops of Berlin.

"Is this where devotion leads one?" I thought, "to that absurd creature in Spandau?" I felt that I was sinking into a mental morass which I had no means of traversing, a place where there was no sure ground. I tried again to elaborate and differentiate what contemplation of a crucifix would do to the human mind versus contemplation of the empty cross. That interested me; but a circle of

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dark-faced men and lustrous, interrogative women surrounded me and barred the way. Then very slowly I retracted two words. One was "devotion" and the other was "absurd." Devotion suggests service—I had rendered none—and the woman of Spandau was too dignified to be absurd.

"This memory has no place here," I explained to myself; "it is irrelevant and comic." But to a Christianized evaluation of event, I realized that it might not seem very mirth-provoking. Something within me suggested that as a woman whose interest in sports was lifelong I had no right to lay down rules and then evade them and at the beginning of my quest I had laid down this rule—to give all associative thought about the cross of Christ due consideration. I was attempting to ignore or erase a persistent associative thought.

My first meeting with the Jewish lady of Spandau was in the saloon of a crack Cunard liner, very early one morning in mid-Atlantic. We were alone together. I was writing letters and she was playing softly at the piano. I could have touched her with my hand, her keyboard was so near my blotter. At first I was vexed with her for coming to play when I was writing, but her music brought us together with a sudden friendliness that racial similarity could not have accomplished. She played one of Brahms Intermezzi very understand-

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ingly, and then an arrangement of one of his songs.

"What a nice arrangement! Whose is it?" I exclaimed involuntarily.

"Mine," she answered, and went on playing. Presently I stopped writing. She had begun to play "*Immer leiser wird mein Schlummer*," very beautifully indeed. Impulsively I sang it.

When we had finished she said, "Let us do 'Nightingale'—it is so heavenly."

We did, and before luncheon, my letters still unwritten, we had sung all of Brahms that we could remember and we had not spoken a word of English. The next morning the purser—who liked music—found us a piano in a much less public place and we sang Wolf and Franz and Schumann and one or two of Bach's alto songs; but when we tried to sing through the Schubert Album by heart, we were stuck; we couldn't remember phrases in songs we had both known since childhood. She stood next me in the tender at Cherbourg and spoke to me for the first time in English. She said, "I have a feeling that it may be only in heaven we shall hear that grand Amen."

"Meaning just what?" I asked.

"The Schubert Album," she replied, wistfully.

Then I said what we all say when we think we shan't see people again: "When you hear of me as in your neighborhood or I hear of you in mine,

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we'll sing those songs together for an audience." She just put out her hand and shook mine and I reflected that I was not going to Germany nor she returning to our country. But a business matter took us unexpectedly to Berlin and she—seeing our names in the newspaper as "arrivals" at our hotel—left cards, recalled our pact, and invited us to her house in Spandau to dine and spend the night. I felt we simply had to go and—groaning—we chose a night and accepted.

We really had a wonderful evening, but if Hubble could describe dwellers—if any!—in his island universes of the far Nebulæ, they wouldn't have seemed any more remote than these sleek, suave, dark men and women—all seeming, to my quickened senses, to be waiting patiently for me to say something gauche about their being Jews. Music saved the situation. But why this long and pointless recollection when I was attempting to reach a visualization, a reverent and, of course, all too small evaluation of the cross? That attempt had led me back to these Jews, and their rich food, their sweet expensive wine, their handsome cryptic faces rose on the darkness of my cabin like moons! I remembered their unused fat bodies and their nimble surcharged brains. Then I realized why I was reliving this evening; it was because of the use my hostess had made of the cross. I didn't want



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to think of it; I rebelled. I tried to be reasonable and said to myself: "I realize that all the paths that lead to the holy hill cannot be well paved and lined with lindens, but this path leads away from it. It would be irreverent and unnecessary to follow it."

If I turned back, I should have to traverse the skilled exaggeration of a good story, for what is to come—the tale of the cross and the Jewish lady of Spandau—had become a funny tale. Funny tales are not told at the foot of the cross. I was defeated; my quest was over. Doctor Jones became a person of special temperament, Christ a lofty ideal to-day's minds may not scale. Only as I closed my eyes I had an idea—or perhaps it was when I woke—that the crucifix is just what the Roman Catholics assert that it is—a means of redintegration, of bringing back Christ's sacrifice to sinners' minds. But the meaning of the empty cross—oh, most provocative idea!—is to put oneself in his place! It implies spiritual opportunity. Is that what the Protestant idea is? I went to the porthole for air. I am afraid that my thought was—"for God's sake"—which, lightly spoken, always means one's own—"let me be a Catholic!" I seemed to see ages ahead of me and ages behind, my spirit felt instructed. I understood—a little bit too—people like Florence Nightingale with

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their passion for human service. I was at large with the Christian women of the world, and then as suddenly as the closing of a door I was again alone with the Jewish lady of Spandau.

The time was the morning after, when the men—mine as well as hers—had gone to their work. I was standing in her doorway examining her Adler motor, for she was to drive me back to the hotel. She joined me leisurely, deliberative, her fat maid, Hannah, flanking her, too obsequiously, like all German servants.

“Hannah,” she said, “I will put on my cross after all. I have time to go shopping.”

I watched, quite silent, while Hannah departed and returned with a jeweled cross on a flexible metal ribbon, very flashy and formidable. She fastened it about her mistress’s neck and we started.

“I find,” my hostess said, complacently, “that I get much better attention in the shops if I wear a cross. Berlin tradespeople cater to the aristocracy, for by them comes foreign patronage. They neglect Jewish customers.”

She had gone off to buy her autumn hats and her shoes and gloves under the ægis of that emblem, and I had seen nothing in it but the basis of a funny story. I had no feeling of great condemnation as I recalled the thoughts I tried to have and the fact that festered in my memory—I had an

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abased feeling of great foolishness that I had begun a noble adventure in the rotten vehicle of my own past. On the gay note paper in my little locker by the dressing table I wrote as nice a letter as I knew how in answer to one I had received from Spandau four months before. Then I went to sleep. But in that time of rest or just before it, all bitterness against Jews, all physical repulsion against them, all desire to make them ridiculous or to exploit them, left me. I realize their limitations. I regret many of their attributes, but I live in a bi-racial city as their friend. Does it cost me something? Yes: the censure of my family and my oldest friends, but I have my exceeding great rewards as well.

It is impossible to write in detail about the pattern I at last made. It is a pattern I trace and retrace in the quiet of my mind.

I put down here its points of stress lest someone who realizes that the recurrence of good thought is a pathway to Christ might care to know what passes in my practice hour of the *Étude* of the Empty Cross.

I begin by thinking what the cross has meant to humanity and I refuse no thought of good or ill. For instance, I realize that the Jesuits introduced crucifixion into China by their insistence on the symbol of the crucifix and I think of the empty

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cross as opportunity to amend even that. Of course, I think of Saint Francis, but the stigmata are subjective although they show a constant contemplation of Christ's death. It was his spirit that has blessed the world. I even think of a big cross I once saw in Segovia that the Spaniards used to thrust into the fires of the *auto da fe* in case any of the charred and writhing victims had recanted their heresy. I am not afraid to face the human outcome of misapplication and misinterpretation of the crucifix, for we have also the empty cross. The worst lies known are arrangements of the truth, so I will not think of loveliness alone. But those unhappy instances occur less often to me now and I am able to turn from earlier evaluations to to-day's application of the cross. I count them over and I see that they stand increasingly for mercy and understanding. I am not happy at thought of the flaming cross of the Ku Klux. Masked men in our civilization affront ideals of justice, but persecution is the twin sister of prejudice, and when that dies—and it is dying—the other will die too. When I think of what the cross meant to John Wesley, I realize it dwarfed the agonized details of his mismating, and when historians say he kept the French Revolution away from British political sympathy by pre-empting the public ear with his restatement of the Christian message, they

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forget to mention his sorrows or failure to find understanding from the woman who was his wife. I think with deepest reverence of what the cross meant to Bach and through him to the world. I wonder what it meant to Brahms—heroically religious figure that he is to those with ears to hear—and I think of what it must mean to hundreds of inarticulate, but very active men and women at home and abroad. I contrast the way of the crucifix and the way of the empty cross very often.

There is one imaginative flight that I often permit myself because it refreshes me completely, and I put it just here in the pattern I have made. I picture the three crosses and the thief's release from his foreboding and remorse by Christ's promise to him and his actual death. I dare the fantasy of sending my mind after him to his resumption of consciousness when discarnate: when, death behind and Christ with him in power, he probes new values with aspiration, released from old appetites. The thinking cap of the religious dreamer is the liberty cap of the world, but sane people discriminate between fancy and fact, and the indulging of a dear dream is complete mental relaxation.

And I think how young Christianity is, how many its vicissitudes, how miraculous its spread, how universal its fascination. Men have tried to



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imprison it in every kind of pagan mold and nationalistic apology, but it endures, restated as its comprehension advances, simplified and above all applied to human needs and nationalistic practices. With the water lapping our keel I practiced those thoughts every night, pressing them deep into my consciousness, hoping to make a furrow in my mind; and sometimes, very rarely, the three crosses on the hilltop would merge into one and I would feel that I was learning and almost ready to read in the Gospels the accounts of the crucifixion, for it was that to which this practice was specially directed. I had read of first contacts and then tried to brood over them, but I wanted to be prepared in spirit, if I could be, for rereading of a story that has changed the world.

Late one afternoon our smart yacht docked in the sleepy town in which we spent a large part of our summers. We had tea in my garden and our farewells were long and many. Five boys—my son among them—were coming in the night train from New York; before nine in the morning the old house would hum with them. I looked through their rooms and mine, ate a late and solitary meal, and sat down by the reading lamp in my son's study, to read the stories of the death of Christ. The servants locked the house and went to their beds.

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The hill of Calvary was higher than I knew, but somehow I clambered up one of its paths and stood upon a point above any I had known before; within more than hearing, within at least partial comprehension of the deathless words of a dying Saviour. The thoughts that I had forced myself to think, the recollections I had fostered, had strengthened me to the realization of implications and inspirations, of love and pity and spiritual stimulation, of possible correspondences and as yet unshaped ends, that developed life for me illimitably in the awed hours in which I read the different versions of a supreme event. It was a new record, visibly divine. Humanity was dignified by so great and godlike a contribution as the departure of this perfect soul. Love and gratitude and the deepening sense of infinite gain, of strength beyond seeking and the joy of a possession that has not grown less made me unmindful of technique and my own conscious effort as I went upstairs to sleep, but in the morning I concluded that the *Étude* of the Empty Cross is the chosen study of my life. Few days of it pass without my practice of it.

JANE CAME

The next morning at seven o'clock I was fast asleep but I heard a constant ringing in my dreams

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that developed, when it woke me, into the telephone. I rushed to it, for the servants were at breakfast in their wing and their voices and laughter made it impossible for them to hear what went on in the main house.

"Jane speaking," a timid voice announced.

My passenger's wild girl arose before me, distinct in every detail. I said, "Where are you?"

"I am about three hundred and fifty yards from you in a little house that takes transients. I must speak to you."

"Can you see my garden?"

"Yes."

"They will be laying two places on that round table by the big hawthorn presently—one of them is for you—in half an hour."

I dressed and thought of piles of unopened letters and of the boys coming. I thought of the night before as a rubicon; I knew that I should never be quite the same again; my sympathies were intensified and purified, and I was so glad of it! As I approached the breakfast table a somewhat thinner Jane approached me. She had come down from a fishing club in Canada, she said very briefly. She was fearfully hungry and very much embarrassed.

"One of the little boys I took care of had mastoiditis when I left you and got back to him, but

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a very well-known ear doctor happened to be in Quebec. He came up and did the operation. I helped everyone—washing and moving things—and the boys told the doctor that I wanted to be a trained nurse for dope fiends. He told me he would give me a letter if you would, and that if these letters were presented at his hospital in New York on or before Monday, I could go as a probationer.”

“I couldn’t say I’ve known you very long,” I declared.

“No, but you know me better than anyone else, really you do,” she insisted.

We sat talking for a little while. She had been practicing technical exercises. I was touched almost to tears, but I thought of her rage and the name she had called me. She had reformed her own reverie with a substitution of thought both bold and ingenious, and she was sure that Christ had made response in this perfectly unexpected opening to hospital life. She told me all this as quietly as if it were village news. She had routed self-pity by her own effort, but Christ had done the rest. After half an hour she meant as much to me as I could possibly mean to her. We never mentioned my passenger. She had had to pay her life insurance policy and was almost penniless, but she only told me that when I asked her about her

finances. I sent across for her bag and said to her, "I have nowhere to put you but my writing room, it has just the dimensions of a grave and is known as the Black Hole of Calcutta, but we can put a cot in it." She went up to put her things away and the boys came. I had never seen them before quite as they seemed to me then, so able, mannerly, and purposeful. I realized for the first time that they were the products of schools and universities built as Christian efforts and reminders, and that most of their thought was governed and bounded by Christ whether they acknowledged it or not. I smiled at my own blindness never to have seen it before. I helped give them breakfast and listened to their adventures and they told me I was going to have a dinner party that evening. Some girls they knew were coming to bathe by moonlight in a neighbor's swimming pool. Then they went upstairs to bathe and dress in fresh clothes and I heard them singing at the tops of their voices. The day grew frightfully hot and they came in from the tennis court just before luncheon looking like boiled lobsters. I wondered how Jane would take them and they would take Jane.

"As a matter of human interest," my son demanded after they had shaken hands, "where is the lady sleeping?"

"In the Black Hole of Calcutta."



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One of the other boys offered to get a pulmotor—he had slept there too, and it is stuffy.

Jane observed that there wasn't any air anywhere, so she wasn't out of luck.

Another boy said "Stout fellah!" and they went upstairs to more baths and more singing. So far Jane was welcome! I was told that luncheon would be kept back fifteen minutes that they might be ready for it.

Jane said the servants seemed to love these young men.

"We all do," I answered.

"How many of them are your own children?" she asked.

"Only one."

"And the others, do you mind my asking?—adopted?"

"No, just friends. Why did you think that?"

"Three of the boys kissed you when they came in this morning and two of them didn't." She said it very critically and I could feel anger creep up on me.

"How amusing, Jane! The dark-haired boy who didn't kiss me I never saw before, and the other boy I know really better than my own son. He is very open and loves to explain himself, but he has never kissed me. He probably thinks kissing is silly, or unhygienic."

"I have never seen manners like theirs before," she said, slowly.

Before luncheon was over I saw that the boys liked Jane. She is very handsome, and there was something peaceful and receptive about her. Without saying much, she registered.

Boys love to lie down, and after luncheon they collected long chairs from the garden and bedrooms, put them in a row in the living room and tried to read. In ten minutes they were all asleep—late nights in Newport and one on the train made this very explicable. It is the custom of our little town to put a card on the gate with OUT on it when you don't want to see people. I had one—very elaborate—given me at Christmas and I saw one of the servants, after looking in on the boys, go hang it up for all possible callers to read. Jane drew near. She wasn't the least shy or self-conscious. "I have made two religious exercises, shall I show them to you?" she asked.

"I wish you would," I answered.

The first was a search for courage, a study of the bravery of the saints. It was exhaustive and here and there very beautiful. I caught my breath at one point when I saw that suicide had been firmly in her mind. One sentence that she had typed in her matter-of-fact way will always stay by me: "Those who dare look at self-inflicted death

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without a tremor are those who no longer dare to look at themselves." What a frenzy of compassion that woke in me!

The second spiritual exercise was just at its beginning and was composed of parallel slights and rebuffs—her own and those of Stephen, of Paul, and of Christ. I was amazed at it. She told me she was looking for a great mind—spiritually speaking—who failed to recognize its fellow. She had read some silly book taken from the Sunday-school library, about an exquisite soul who gained no recognition from very good people about him until he died—when the best families of his home town moaned in unison about his deathbed. She was still looking through the Gospels for that, she said, the other day when she spoke of it again, and that this story of the unwelcome saint had influenced her as a child. As she studied the rigors of rebuff endured by Christ and by his "Companie" her own seemed very negligible. "I am so changed," she said, "so happy and light." We spent the afternoon exchanging moments in our development. I scolded her about being influenced by the mushy tale of the unrecognized saint. She gathered herself for a supreme effort and said, very engagingly, "Don't you believe the best literature influences people to their detriment sometimes?"

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"I shouldn't think so. What's on your mind?"

"After I left you to motor back to a train," she said, "I thought of the only thing I knew about you from any source but one, and, of course, from knowing you personally. When I was at your house a young man came to the door with two books. He said you had lent them to him. They were *Pride and Prejudice* and *Emma*. 'Be sure to give them to her. They're from an old edition, and you probably know she's crazy about Jane Austen.'"

"That's all right; I got them. They're here in this room," I explained.

"That's not all," she went on. "Up at the club I sat up three nights in case the nurse wanted anything, and I got those books out of the club library and read them. I saw where you got your idea of clergymen."

"Where?" I demanded.

"From Mr. Collins and Mr. Elton."

She was right, I'm sure. I read those books for the first time about the time of my confirmation, and I am quite sure they settled a "type" in my mind. Jane Austen was doing in her inimitable way what the Wesleys did in theirs—showing to the world the self-indulgence of a comfort-loving clergy, their calculating worldliness; but her exposition was an amusing comedy of manners,

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useful for the clergy themselves to read but not meant to teach contempt to the laity. I wasn't angry, not the least bit—which was remarkable—but I was amazed, first that Jane had discovered my distrust of the cloth, and next that she had found out whence it had emanated.

The thing she told me that interested me most, because it seemed so bizarre, so fantastic, was that for some time she had hated happy people. "Just a month ago," she said (what Jane had gained in less than a month!), "I should have looked at these young men and loathed them. I should have said they drink possibly and are very loose livers."

"Not very much drinking, Jane—one does a lot; and one never does; the others are very sensible."

"Oh, yes," she answered quickly, "but I should have said it, and I should have said lots of other things."

"Life is very free now, thank God!" I returned; "it has changed entirely. The fast people of to-day are not the freest livers, by any manner of means."

Jane didn't agree with me there. I wanted to say, "You were fast, my passenger was fast; these boys are merely forthright."



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## Game of One Old Cat

I COULD see that Jane had her misgivings about the boys although she tried hard to conquer them, but I had lost all misgiving about her. She helped me with my mail and was the most companionable person imaginable, but she did one thing that hurt me terribly—she took it for granted that any sort of stupidity like hers and my passenger's would have been impossible to the shining virtue of my own youthful days. This confident attitude of hers called from my past a rather hideous year or two that had at last dragged to an end, but I knew that telling her about it would be unwise for her and emotionally self-indulgent for me. Her extravagant estimate of my graces and virtues was a help to her, but how I did wish she hadn't opened that particular vista on a connection that I regretted, an association that entailed secrecy and daily misrepresentation. It hadn't ended in social disaster and was never technically wicked, but I wished horribly that I didn't remember it. I regretted it. I felt such a hypocrite, and every time I recalled it, it oxidized my aspirations; they turned black and withered before

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my eyes. It was the stealth connected with it that I so hated, I couldn't comprehend in retrospect why I hadn't hated it at the time I was practicing it. I vowed that if I ever saw Doctor Jones face to face, I'd tell him about it. That would be confession, a sound thing to do from the standpoint of Christianity and psychology alike. I had to admit that I shouldn't enjoy it very much, but I owed it to new standards.

I kept that vow and I have been released from the memory entirely. If anyone tells me there is nothing of human comfort in confession, I shall be obliged to disagree with him, but I think it happens when it is religiously, not socially undertaken. The result of my confession was like getting rid of a presence one hated. It was gone, it was mysteriously, joyfully, over!

The girls arrived for dinner all of half an hour late, but as no one expected them to be on time it merely promoted gayety by giving the boys something to take them to task for. Jane looked very dubious indeed when my boy said, "How long does it take to put on all that lipstick?" to one child whose face and mouth were unduly vivid. About an hour after dinner they changed into bathing suits, and drove over to the pool. Jane finally changed mind and clothes and went with them for the heat was poisonous, and I stayed at home doing

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letters. She came back with them, and there was something almost sheepish about her.

"There were a lot of older people over there," she said; "I thought I'd be the only one."

"Is that why you went?" I asked.

"They seemed so young and so reckless I . . . I thought I'd better go."

"Jane," I said, very solemnly, "that was awfully nice of you, but those children aren't anything in the world but well-behaved young men and women."

"There was nothing to drink," she acknowledged, rather grudgingly.

"You must have been disappointed about that," I answered and went on writing.

One of the boys rushed in and said, "Come on, Jane, we're going to play 'One old cat.'"

I looked out in the garden and saw that an electric lantern had been turned on the round rubber mat that goes under a flower pot; that was the home plate. Tennis bats had appeared and a soft ball. The girls were to play the boys, and it would be five against five—counting Jane.

"But they ought to be going home," she said.

"Why?" I asked. "It's so hot that no one could possibly sleep who isn't tired out."

"Then I'll go and put on a dress," she said, resignedly.

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"Jane," I answered, "don't be ridiculous. A bathing suit is right to play ball in—especially in the dark. I don't want you to confound these girls and boys with others you may have met who are less well behaved. Go out there and try to be as decent as they are."

She was abashed—which was just what she should have been—and went stiffly, grudgingly, into the garden.

The girls pitched first and the boys batted—I stood at the window watching them. I have an old servant who has lived with me for years who now made his appearance with drinks, and the boys at once took him for a mascot. The moral effect of this on the girls was at first bad; but someone had a turtle which one of my young nephews had given him because his mother stoutly refused to take it home, and they grabbed that for their mascot. Jane said she felt they were making too much noise. I told her we had asked the whole neighborhood if they minded these ball games and were told they couldn't even hear them. She was recalled sharply to her position and sluggishly obeyed.

I went back to my letters, but presently I heard such a wild shout that I went again to the window—Jane was just completing a home run. I left my desk and went upstairs persuaded that her last sus-

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pitions of people who lived differently from her former associates had been laid at rest.

She left us the next morning because a night letter from the hospital I had written to told her to come at once for trial, and the succeeding day I had a letter from her that raised my heart while it made me feel very small. She began by saying that class prejudice existed more bitterly from her kind against our kind than the other way about and that her life had been poisoned with it. She added that she had always thought—and had given the matter thought—that boys of the kind she had met with us would have treated her rudely or ignored her no matter how she had met them, and that when they had tried to bring her into the circle when the other girls came, she had been frightened at first, thinking they were trying to “pick her up.” Her great distrust of their kind had been lessened and she had never had such fun in her life. (Poor soul!) “I have to tell you all this,” she added, “I owe it to them.”

I loved Jane for that letter. It was one more instance of her acting on a good impulse before it was stale. I went here and there thinking of her and wondering if she could hold down the work she wanted to do. Life is such a curious thing when one dwells on the influences that have shaped it. Jane was a gift of God to me, taking



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away the unreality of response to the inner voice, as I had learned from Doctor Jones to call it. I admire her as much as anyone I know—not, of course, for any cultural quality as yet, but because she tackles her own problems so promptly that she has time for other people's. She waits until they are presented to her—she doesn't run about looking for trouble; but, as Pasteur said, "Chance favors the prepared mind."

One Saturday afternoon about a month later I was welcoming the boys back for the week-end when a telegram was handed me from Jane saying that she had been accepted at the hospital as a probationer. I read it out with pride. The evening's post brought me a letter from my passenger telling me that he was going to marry a girl of very desirable family, whose brother he had met in the chorus of our operetta. He said the engagement would be announced the following Friday at her aunt's in Newport. I reflected with dismay upon the horrible responsibility one takes in introducing one human being to another and of the unending satisfaction my passenger would derive from the newspapers. But then I began to think about Jane. In all probability she would get her announcement on Monday morning. I wired her asking her to dine and go to a play with me on Monday evening, and when she accepted on

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Monday morning, I took a plane to New York and we dined together at the club. She was pale and very thoughtful, but she said nothing until the play was over and I was driving her back to the hospital. One can't repeat what she said, but it was so simple and unconsciously noble that I remember it all clearly to-day. She practiced her thought patterns, she said, and added to them; she prayed now and had made a thought pattern for a woman who distrusted her son, the young and busy interne who gave Jane orders. "The change has come to me with completeness," she told me, "even if it is sudden." It was so; I could scarcely credit it.

We sat talking in the taxi, her handsome face flooded with moonlight, and before I left she told me the basis of her *Étude of the Absent Son*. She was modest about its effect but I have used it on a maniacal mother myself and know its power. All young people who are absorbed in creative work are less conscious of their parents than their parents are of them. If that were not so, they would sit at home watching, instead of faring forth doing. They are not always—perhaps not often—drunk, or in the power of alien persons, when they are not at home at the accustomed time! The classic instance of parental anxiety is that of Joseph and Mary when they left Jerusalem without our

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Saviour. They were in the too familiar phrase "worried to death" about him, and when he appeared his "Wist ye not" was the prototype of many a young person's plea.

The reason of his detention was clear to him and obscure to them. Jane told me that the thought that no less a person than the Redeemer of the world had kept his parents waiting and anxious had an extraordinary and salutary effect on this mother who felt neglected and slighted. She elaborated her theme with enthusiasm and I looked at her with amazement. There is nothing irreverent or trivial about her—she is amazingly practical, remedial in purpose and simple.

"How," I asked, "do you get people to try your thought-patterns?"

"I tell them what yours did for me, and I say that it seemed so silly to me when first you spoke of it that if you hadn't been able to tell me what thoughts I habitually had at night I shouldn't have tried it."

"How long did you practice it?"

"I practice it now—elaborated. I force my mind along that road often and at the end of it find a consciousness of God that makes prayer a necessity."

I think she must have guessed what I didn't dare ask her, for she told me that the letter she had

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that morning—as I knew she would have it—had hurt her, but that she had practiced all sorts of fortitude patterns and that one of her exercises had been to refrain from mentioning my passenger's name to anyone or responding with confidences of her own to those made to her by the other girls in training. I kissed her good night and went off to board the midnight train, the mystery of godliness possessing my mind.

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## The Étude of the Edict

WHEN summer days were over and city life had begun again, the tiny space in which we live was congested with notes and circulars—charts to the varied and winding ways of activity spreading out in a forward vista of the winter months. Outwardly I lived by the clock, inwardly I lived by Christ. I was up late at night and my son had to be up early in the morning. Except when we dined together or—very rarely—had an interview in the afternoon, the most vivid times in all my waking hours were those I spent in taxicabs in the streets after dark, going home to change for dinner, or on my way to or from music, or cards, or the theater. Taxicabs were little temples to me, I prayed in them. A continuous sense that I have never lost came to me then—making permanent the old occasional sense that I was a thought in Christ's mind. It intensified his power in mine. The habitual consciousness of him, the recurrent recognition of his power and his presence was a gift to me resulting in a poignant joy that assails me often but which began then. I was drawn up and out of my own life; hours began to pass for me in which I worked hard without account of time.



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I would be tired afterward but neither unwilling nor languid as I had been, and I read new truths easily. For the first time I realized that I was fearfully masterful, and although I have fits of being that now I can see it and pursue the somewhat unequal struggle of letting other people have half a chance. I had no one to whom I could speak of these things. Jane was properly and temporarily lost to me, as her work took everything she had to offer. Perhaps because the churches were all closed when first I had wanted to enter them I had a repulsed feeling whenever I looked at them which no amount of handshaking after service at eleven o'clock on Sunday will ever rub out. I have heard that long ago Protestants had to barricade themselves in their meetinghouses to prevent arrest as heretics and that that is the reason that their churches are closed almost all the time now—a rather silly reason in a free country to-day.

I noticed a curious thing in December—and I don't want to give any impression of self-examination or psychoanalysis self-conducted, for I never attempt that sort of thing for very long at a time. Some incontrovertible—usually disagreeable—habit or characteristic confronts me because I fail or have failed to conform to an acceptable standard in manner or behavior. I noticed that I could look away from music to God or from the exces-

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sively painted faces of stage people to the face of Truth, but that two friends of mine absolutely divided me from any sense of Christ's power or desire for his presence. Their influence was narcotic, the things dearest to me slept when I was with them. I was only alive on the surface when we were together. They are man and wife, and we have been brought up together. Although they were the loyal, comfortable friends they always had been, I grew to feel that they were much less desirable than they used to be, and that it was their fault that I was unable to climb the initial height of the thought-pattern of the Empty Cross after I had been with them. I believed that they struck from me the very power by which I lived. They were all the time arranging to dine with me or have me come to them, and after such an evening I would be restless and miserable half the night, reading things about Christ and feeling as if I were looking at a religious life through the wrong end of an opera glass. One evening we had a German diplomat for a guest, and his shamed, dismal estimate of the world at large matched the mood I often had when I dined alone with these friends of mine. I turned to the Bible to raise myself to a little higher level: one can at least count on its being interesting. I began to read the thirteenth chapter of John. Its caption read,

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"Jesus washeth his disciples' feet; exhorteth humility; commandeth them to love one another."

When I read the story itself, the scene was reconstructed so vividly that I felt it to be a different narrative and that I had looked for a moment on the tragic tenderness of the actuality of the scene in that upper room. When moments like that come to one, it is silly to try to minimize them. I had found something basically mine and remote in meaning from the caption at the chapter's head. After I had gone to bed I had to get up and read it again. I realized that I couldn't concentrate on it without a cigarette and apologized to myself that this appetite always outran my aspirations. Even with a cigarette my mind was troubled and aloof from the mood in which one works in peace. I attempted one of my thought patterns, as Jane had called the *études* I used to increase the ability to receive religious impressions and overcome adverse personal tendencies. I became conscious of the dissatisfaction I felt with my old and devoted friends—of the inner bewilderment I felt that after hours spent with them I could not return to Christ. I determined to search for some reason for that—I felt it to be some fault of theirs, but what fault? After a while I was again confronted with the story I had just read whose caption magnified details and dwarfed psychological content,

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as well as the development of the narrative itself. I was able to read it again and again until my memory held it tight. Until now it had been buried for me in the devoted misapprehension of the "one-text-at-a-time" Bible readers—dear but dangerous folk!

I knew that I must investigate every associative thread and drag out the story till it reappeared as a clear account, freeing it from what still seems to me the sentimentalities and fantastic liberties of those who take the caption more seriously than the tale itself. My cook has a French Testament which she keeps in the kitchen. I got it and read the story in another language, that the details might fall into place. I let all the associative detail my memory afforded pass in review—a Maundy Thursday in Seville when the priest spoke of the commemoration of the washing of the disciples' feet as a flower flung in the path of a great tradition. I recalled the next morning's account in the newspapers of the Spanish king and queen washing the feet of a specially chosen beggar—meticulously pedicured—who, after the ceremony and a big meal, had been turned loose with a bag of gold. Then I recalled a poem line I had read in a rather high-brow magazine; the poem was called "Humility." Its allusion to the washing of the feet made Christ's act a sort of stained-glass

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attitude, devitalizing his relation to Judas and the relation of Judas to the future and ignoring Christ's fears that Peter, the still double-minded, the mystic who was always aware of the market place, might be lost to him too. I believe the poet had forgotten the scene in Matthew in which Christ's hopes for Peter flared into outspoken appreciation of his spiritual quality and a prediction of his power. Christ knew the fear and terror of losing a man to whom he had been able to say—"I will give unto you the keys of the kingdom of heaven." Peter was about to fling away those keys. If that is forgotten, the story is without its basis. Not as Judas betrayed him could Peter forsake him; Peter's avenue of flight was his own temperament. I was looking into that story through the day's occupation and when I came home that night. I had a play to read for a friend of mine who is a theatrical producer, and early the next morning I nerved myself to set aside other things and get down to the manuscript that was bothering him with the eternal problem of whether a piece is good theater or clever academic exposition of artificiality. I reread it in the afternoon and posted it back in the evening at eleven o'clock—too soon to sleep if one has been at work. I took up the thirteenth chapter again and began to read it as if I had never done so before. I read



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it as if I were still judging plays. I asked myself the routine questions: What is this story? Just where in their associations do these characters find themselves? Are they to be accepted as saints or still seekers? What do they know about one another and how did they learn it? Does each one know what his companion knows? What was the story written to portray? Is it a thesis or a narrative? If a narrative, what is its psychological content? The answers came slowly because, as I said, everything was overlaid with other people's voices and words—illuminations in missals and pictures. A picture of Greco's of this scene, alone seemed to me to be painted true. I retrospectively looked at it a long time, for every other that I called to mind was fanciful or oversweet. Suppose this were a play, I said to myself, and one of the actors had distorted it by overemphasis of a scene; the management would put the scene "back into the story." I tried to put the washing of feet back into Christ's story. I felt it had been dragged outside the progression of the tragedy itself. In the hours I spent with that scene in the upper room I formulated a technique for "searching the Scriptures" whose first precept is what I learned to do on the yacht—accept, after examination, every associative thought that comes to you; eliminate if you will, but never suppress. It is safe

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and wise to think of everything if your mind is at its highest level, as a mind is apt to be when it voluntarily turns to the New Testament. And then think of the characters as men—don't be afraid to think of them in the making. When first I began to read the Gospels I was so mindful of the heroic ends of most of the people that I saw them misbehaving with their halos on, so to speak. Their humanity was obliterated by their subsequent and complete mastery of mind and mood. The third precept which I regarded then and do now as vital, was the holding fast to the situation, the point in the story at which the incidents occur; no incidents must be isolated, for these things didn't occur to make nice sermons and verses, but to make men. As I saw the scene now anxiety for Peter surged in Christ's mind. He of all of the company knew that Judas had left him, although the result of that defection was still to be. Was Peter to go too?

I read everything I could lay my hands on about Peter: his swift moods and ready sympathy, his complete faith in Christ whenever his mind was held by him. He emerged from all this as a man perfect in first contacts, with a response to all voices, the very epitome of the modern mind and perhaps the prototype of young America in that he had the desire to stand well in all circles, which

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can't be done until most of them have been successfully defied. The more I read about him while he was in the making, the more I felt his eternal youthfulness and his very modern impulse to dramatize his own personality. He was absolutely controlled by the sympathy active in him for the time being—as witness the ear of Malchus and the classic denial of all acquaintance with the Nazarene, who had foreseen it and had washed his feet that he might learn the way back to the ultimate devotion of a cleansed response. Peter knew himself in his repentance even as Christ knew him, and no longer hoped to live on two levels—the heights where Christ's hand had held him and the broad, far stretches of easy human intercourse where high things are discussed but rarely attained. He was to be shown that it is as impossible mentally as well as physically to be in two places at once. He was rocking as he stood—the rock upon which Christ built his church—he was swamped by double images, not from choice but from temperament, an

“O God, who made the world so fair,  
Yours is the hand that placed me there,”

sort of modernist excuse for every capitulation must have been in his mind too—his highly sensitized mind.

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It was wonderful and beautiful to be in that upper room but would his memory linger there when the crucifixion belonged to yesterday and the prestige of being one of the chosen twelve brought new contacts and the teaching function and authority? Christ framed the answer to that when he cleansed him and forestalled the almost inevitable catastrophe of the lesser good. To keep him on the highest level of human development—complete and conscious knowledge of God—Christ pronounced the edict of exclusion that is terribly implicit in human life, “Except I wash you, you have no part in me!” He spoke it in the extreme of human tenderness and divine understanding. It was not to edify the ages that Christ washed his disciples’ feet. It was in inexpressible anxiety that he gave himself to the uses of the lowly and so voiced the terrible automatic actuality that is not of his will but which is factual and swift in demonstration. Christ washed away the double image life had stamped on a too responsive nature. Except for that Peter could have forgiven himself all that he did—he would have lived the life to *his* limit—not to the capacity that was in Christ.

The edict of exclusion became a big factor in my thought. I loved it, as Peter must have too, that the fearful truth was told us within the shadow of farewell. I examined that heart-changing story

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many times before I wove it into the thought pattern I use to-day. It needs no sentimentalization, one must sometimes forget the story's caption and take its crux. It is a story that gives on prayer and leads one to dare the cleansing of Christ beyond what seemed possible, and always at first what seemed desirable. It is the basis of an exchange of wills.

It is a terrible story, not a stained-glass attitude; and the steady phrase that keeps the mind from rejecting beauty because it brings joy, that prevents our cutting off the arts merely that we may be austere, is, "He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, and is clean every whit." That is the caution against excess. The inevitable human tendency to snatch at comfort rather than to obey a difficult command was, I thought, responsible for the peculiar use that has been made of this story. The more I read it the more I prayed that I might be clean—not cleaner—but clean, more accessible to the divine will. It is a wonderful thing to be sure that there *is* a divine will.

One day I was listening to one of our great orchestras, when the thought of those friends of mine with whom I was to dine that night came to me with a sense of oppression. "They rob me of all I love most," I said to myself—"of the sense of the invisible God, the character of



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Christ's followers and his own intention toward humanity; they confound me with my own words spoken long ago. If it were not so disgustingly ungrateful, I would let them alone entirely." I fancied that evening's scene. I would enter their long living-room with my heart aflame with love for Christ but without speaking his name; my will would be bent to a particular task I had just undertaken solely because I thought it expressed his spirit, but I wouldn't mention it, and throughout the evening we would talk and laugh and work out bridge problems exactly as if I felt about life and its possibilities as I had when first we debated them. The edict of exclusion was operative in my own life, but I hadn't seen it until that moment when the pastoral symphony was flowing softly round me and I was sitting quiet in the dark hall.

I was excluded from all correspondence with Christ. He was withdrawn from me, not by any act of my friends but by my own insincerity and double-mindedness. I had known the terror of the exclusion that automatically and inevitably descends on those who stifle truth. One learns a lot through pain; I was willing to be clean.

After the other guests had gone that evening I stayed on and told my friends I had been "holding out on them," and as slowly and simply as I

could I told them what had come to me and what I thought about it. They said together as if they had rehearsed it, "This is a great shock to me." They further said a great many things about clergymen and the church which I recognized as my own, but I told them my opinions about such things were unchanged so far as I knew, but that having seen Christ through the window of a minister's mind I now saw more in churches than before. I told them that I felt enormously relieved and that the specter of excessive statement and the bugbear of the banal were ever before me when I spoke of such things, so that they mustn't expect me to explain myself at length. We said good night with a greater freedom and gayety than I had felt with them in a long time. Perhaps fear of the interview itself was a part of this relief, for talking to these people wasn't like talking to Jane, who had no previous knowledge of me. I was glad to be done with explanations to them, for they knew me root and branch. For two or three subsequent interviews they tried to tease me out of it—slyly, because they are really a little afraid of me; and then they took to telling me that I was too sensible to hang on to my opinions for any undue length of time. But now they have stopped all that and I find them trying to talk about religion and its relation to this and that, so that I am going to

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experiment with Doctor Jones' opinion that I ought to talk about the faith that is in me. It seems to me still a rather presumptuous activity—in my case.

It isn't always what one thinks one wants that comes to us from prayer and concentration on Christ. In my case I had thought if I could be just a little number, I shouldn't mind being numb; but it is true that Christ is more abundant life and it is a difficult thing to keep clear of the life about one once the attitude of Christ to humanity is visualized. One begins to find him in the lives of other people and to feel such rejoicing and response in them that the enthusiasm one had planned to hide flames like a beacon. One can no longer say No to those who want culture and rest and sympathy, and even advice—although those who clamor loudest for that usually want approbation. Before I fully realized why I was doing it I had begun to examine a hundred things that had to do with the cultural opportunity of the highly specialized—the talented as they are called. I kept thinking about what a hard row to hoe the girl who specializes has, and what an inconceivably raw deal the young musician has: the greedy teacher tells him his talent is remarkable when it isn't at all; the vocal theorist exploits him; the man with personal charm who doesn't really know how,

holds him when he ought to pass him on. I felt that my speaking part had been assigned to me, that I had access to men and women who had the will and the special knowledge to aid those specialized from birth, but I went at it slowly, for I realized that speaking parts are not for the eager but the wise. I laughed when I found that a big proportion of the musical talent screaming for development was among the Jews, and I often thought of my Spandau friend when I talked to them—sometimes quite bluntly when they did something that could be classified as undesirably typical. The young people came to me with their amazing facility and their invincible intention to express themselves, even if they were repeating someone else. I tried hard to understand them and to be ruthless in showing them their limitations—the only real kindness in dealing with aspirants to a musical career. They had very many fears and an inordinate love of flattery, and they had to be laughed out of that without feeling that they were being dealt with ironically—I soon found that irony makes them little less than suicidal. I devoted special days to them when I would organize friends and opportunities for them and tell them how we expected them to respond. I had powerful people associated with me who were devoted and affectionate, and presently the rich in

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the Jewish community came with offers of help and with amusing conjectures as to my sincerity. The basis of easy intercourse wasn't established in a moment but it was aided enormously by the unexpected and deep friendship of an older woman of their race who is increasingly dear to me. "How practical is the Christian attitude?" I asked myself often in those days, and came to the conclusion that it is just as practical as the Christian himself. With all of us now it isn't an attitude but an activity that makes for expansion in the arts and builds a safe bridge between the races that the best of both pass over without toll and in sane companionship. There is no word of Jew or Christian; the international and omniracial wordlessness of the divine art has a place for its devotees no matter whence they come. Sometimes the responsibility appalls me, the dimensions to which the movement has grown amaze me, but no one ever had more understanding support or more consecutive adherence.

The help of hundreds whose names we hardly know but whose enthusiasm is practically evident, makes those of us who run a certain set of educational activities as sincerely as we can proud of their place in a tragically overgrown city. I look back on the first technical exercises I practiced to overcome racial prejudice and am enormously



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grateful to them. I don't mean that they are a substitute for prayer, but the mind in its early leaning to Christ has to learn to pray—and there is an element of futility in the counsels of those good people who say "Pray without ceasing" to those who have never done more in the matter of prayer than go down on their knees when the rest of the congregation does, on the infrequent occasions of church attendance. I think the idea of études came to me when I realized that the disciples felt that they had to be taught to pray. I felt that I had to learn to pray or the river upon which my aspiration floated would dry up and leave me stranded, and these thought patterns give one the realization of Christ that makes prayer possible—no, more than that: imperative. I have tried them on other people. One of my dear friends who drank too much thinks that one she made for herself cured her of all excess. Her son told me quite simply and is delighted to be quoted, that his mother "hasn't missed a day" for nearly a year, whereas she used to spend a fortune on trips and nurses and doctors, with elaborate lies about sinus trouble, etc., etc. She said to me as we sat in the midst of a crowd on the Country Club terrace, "I'd like to show you the thought pattern I made that helped me up."

"Why don't you?" I asked.

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"A thing like that is so utterly one's own," she answered.

I knew so well what she meant but I said as soon as I had found courage (I am afraid that the silence lasted some time), "It is Christ's too."

"Perhaps," she answered in the most casual way in the world; "that's why I feel like praying at the end of the thought pattern." I asked her why she didn't, and she said she didn't want to be absurd. We were interrupted then but I was so delighted by what she said that I felt like singing. It was so what I wanted the thought patterns to lead to—to prayer.

I have asked her how she practices, and it is just as I did and do. Forcing one's mind along a certain path, deliberately looking in at life and God from certain viewpoints, making rendezvous with this incident or idea and keeping one's engagement with it at a stated time daily. I realized only the other day that Coué with his "Every day in every way I am getting better and better" was offering people a thought pattern, but a thought pattern in which the design was only one's own, not a collaborated design with the Master of minds. Merely a collaboration with an idea thrown out by Doctor Coué.

Sometimes it troubled me as I got into educational work deeper and deeper, that I smoked such

a lot. It was incessant, but I never spoke to anyone of my inability to stop; I smoked—and that was rather extensively that. I used to think about it too much and feel that it was part of the mystery of petty miseries inflicted on my kind of person. I buoyed myself up with the reflection that no particular fuss was made in the New Testament about the bad habits relinquished by the disciples, but it is conceivable that even in the simplicity of Galilee there were things they might have done to excess. Saint Paul at one time had an abnormal appetite for hunting Christians. Of the two leaders of religious impulse in the New Testament John the Baptist was an ascetic, and Christ ate, drank, and fasted after the manner of his people. Perhaps God doesn't expect people to do great things because they don't do little things. Then I would say, "If one's spirit really vibrated with Christ's spirit, moderation would result." I used to tell myself this very plainly—without result. I had many plans to cut down smoking but they did not work, and I was savagely angry with anyone who said I smoked too much. I have a valued acquaintance, a Catholic priest, a most philosophical and cultivated person. In the most courteous and skillful fashion he let me know that he thought it wasn't good for the young people to smoke cigarette for cigarette with me. He was so humor-

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ous and gentle that I didn't realize his rebuke until I was driving home, when I was so hurt and startled that I remember crying out: "Old lunatic! He doesn't know how hard I've tried to stop smoking." His derisive emphasis made me a little defiant. I mourned my defect but I couldn't get rid of it or gloss it over. It was indubitably there. If I were to chronicle all my attempts and failures to stop smoking, I should establish what I was—a creature in the grip of an enslaving habit. I respected enormously everyone who smoked with moderation, but I could not.

One morning I had been walking with an old friend of my father, walking very slowly along the Park wall while he told me tales of young days in which he was with him. He told me all about the Tweed Ring and the Mollie McGuires and lots of interesting things that no one remembers any longer. He was a very distinguished old person and out of respect to him I did not propose sitting on a bench and smoking. I wanted to terribly and yet I couldn't interrupt an interview that had been arranged long ago and looked forward to eagerly. Except when he told me of my father's extraordinary magnanimity—a trait of his of which I am proud—I never ceased wishing for a cigarette. I rushed home to get one before I began the day's round. My secretary had left me a

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list of things I had said I would do and places I had said I would go on that day. I took it up in one hand and put out the other for a cigarette. I never took it up. I wordlessly and absolutely knew that I need never smoke again. I felt comforted and cared for, but I do not know until this hour how I knew that the habit was gone. I looked at the cigarette and could have said with the old woman in the nursery rime, "Lawks, is this I?" Instead I stood silent in the strong sunshine and rejoiced.

I have never had the faintest desire to smoke again, and I live in a fog of other people's smoking. God knows my gratitude and the way I regard that curious experience. To great saints who have suffered gallantly that men might approach God's power I suppose such a demonstration of it as this would seem insignificant, but it is my gift, not theirs. To me it seems sacred and beautiful and exactly what I needed to be reinstated in my own self-respect. Often now when women say to me, "I really must smoke less," and I so well know that they must face the dreary business of counting and craving their cigarettes I am grateful beyond the telling.

There's enough in these pages to show what all this means to me and what the things I have tried to do to widen my own receptivity to spiritual



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things might possibly mean to others whose quest is the same. In other older days every seeker was willing to meet Christ in the mysterious precinct of the miraculous, but the modern first meets him in mood and mind. The mind is the psychic part of the brain; human development is determined by human experience; the highest human experience is the realization of Christ, a realization of God in him, which is as near as one gets to the ultimate in the thronging thoughts that beset contemporary consciousness.

It isn't likely that I can be mistaken for a saintly person in these pages or in life. I could not be, for mine is not the excess of grace that meets every man's need as well as my own. But instead of being a woman who chose to dwell in a tower of ivory—slightly discolored—I am at least a person of purpose to whom Christ is joy, whose activities join ever so faintly the hope of beauty that is the quest of gifted youth. My activities are open as the day and make contact with all classes, I have somehow come alive and sometimes evoke mental life in others. My solitude, when haply I have any, is an approach sometimes crowned with a presence, and within me and at ever shortening intervals I find the impulse to pray. But most of all I value a sharpened sense of honor which has long seemed to me the good most lacking in

to-day's world. Fairness, justice, a distaste for what is stolen or forced from the grasp of feeble hands is a gift of God. Whoever has it wherever, is of him.

Descartes was the first articulate champion of the controlled mind. He said plainly that we may control our thoughts, which is only saying we may choose them, and I believe, as the outcome of experiment, that those who cease to day-dream and deliberately practice a thought pattern will find a thousand graces of which they did not dream either by day or night, if the pattern be founded on a thought or act of Christ or one of his company. I know also by experiment that the suppression of thought is hurtful and makes thought substitution very difficult.

A letter has just been put in my hand as I thought I had typed my last word: "I thought," it says, "that I could never stop grieving for Jim. I lived over all the last days, his humiliation at the horrible things that happened to the body we both were so proud of, and the dreadful nearness of those inscrutable doctors who saw the end over our heads and pretended it wasn't there. But ——— told me about the way you made patterns for your mind and I confess I was impressed, for you've always seemed to me unbelieving Thomas in person—just one rather humorous doubt about

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everything. I want to see you if you come to the old town this summer, for I have been comforted by a pattern I made that began in the thought of Christ's care for his mother when he was dying and that has ended in a private consolation all my own that I'd like to talk about. Will you give me some sort of a job when we all get back in the autumn? And will you tell me more about how you do this thing, for I think there is something in it." I have thought of the writer of this letter as impermeable to religious impression, as able and cruel and vain. But I hear that she has changed immensely, that she has sent for her little son whom she hated because he was deformed, and has been lovely and kind to the villagers in the place she buried herself in in the attempt to win back her husband's health.

I dare to hope that her thought pattern will lead to prayer, and prayer to the developing and high experience of realization of God: the knowledge at first hand that those who face the cross see an eternal sunrise. It is a divine paradox that lifts us from the dullness of the things we must do and from the harsh denial of things we may not do.  
*Sursum corda.*









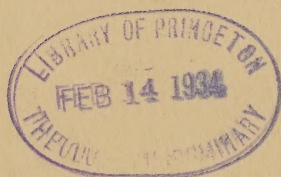
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